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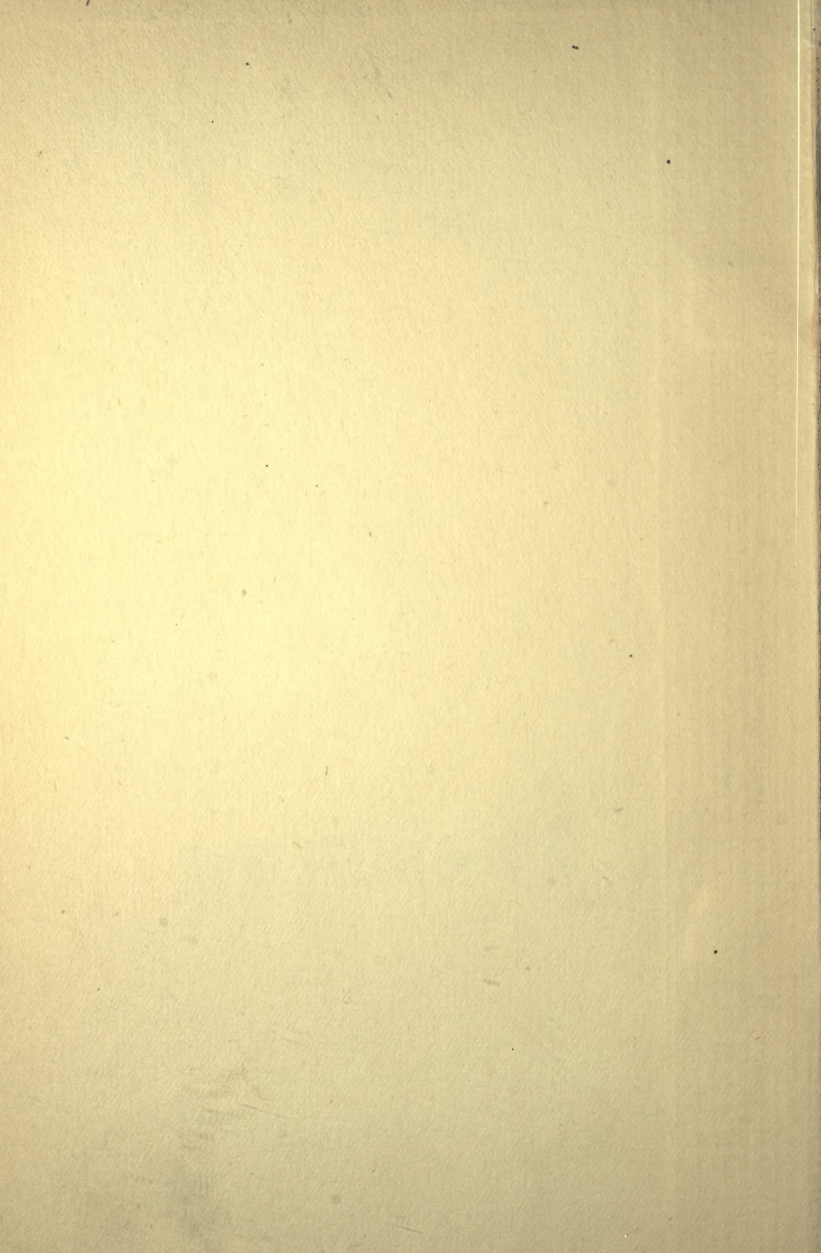
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B. MACDONALD HASTINGS



WITHDRAWN





THE TIDE

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THE TIDE:

An Emancipated
Melodrama in Four Acts, by
BASIL MACDONALD HASTINGS

006 (N)

WITHDRAWN

LONDON : SIDGWICK & JACKSON LTD.
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WITHDRAWN

1402

DEDICATED TO
MY MOTHER

CAST

THIS PLAY was produced at the Queen's Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, on December 14th, 1912, with the following cast :—

Dr. Stratton . . .	Mr. NORMAN TREVOR
Felicity Scarth . . .	Miss ETHEL WARWICK
Lieut. Carmichael Whit- hair . . .	Mr. EDMUND BREON
Maisie Bretherton . . .	Miss MURIEL MARTIN- HARVEY
Mrs. Bretherton . . .	Miss CICELY HAMILTON
Jerry Le Maitre . . .	Mr. SHIEL BARRY
Tom Denny . . .	Mr. J. T. MACMILLAN
Mr. Strick . . .	Mr. HEATH HAVILAND
Chambermaids :	Miss KATHLEEN BARRETT, Miss NANCY GIRLING, Miss LYDIA RUSSELL
Page-boy . . .	Mr. ERIC H. ALBURY

The Play produced by Mr. CLIFFORD BROOKE

SCENES

ACT I. A BEDROOM IN A LONDON HOTEL

(Eighteen months elapse)

ACT II. PETIT BOT BAY, GUERNSEY

ACT III. A COTTAGE IN GUERNSEY

ACT IV. AS IN ACT II

PERSONS CONCERNED

DR. STRATTON

LIEUT. CARMICHAEL WHITHAIR

TOM DENNY

JERRY LE MAITRE

MR. STRICK

MRS. BRETHERTON

MAISIE BRETHERTON

FELICITY SCARTH

HOTEL CHAMBERMAIDS AND PAGE

THE TIDE

ACT I

A BEDROOM IN A LONDON HOTEL

[*The room has a bright wallpaper and is comfortably carpeted. There are no pictures on the walls. The door is situated in the back wall slightly to the left. Just R. of it on the wall hangs a framed list of regulations. The bed, a simple structure, with no top furniture, stands C. against wall, and at the foot of it is an ottoman couch. The window is in the centre of the R. wall, and below it is a fumed oak dressing-table. The mirror on this table is twisted round so that the back of the glass shows. In the C. of the L. wall is a fumed oak wardrobe. On the right of the bed is a small table on which stands a telephone. There are chairs at the dressing-table and to the L. of the bed. Down L. is a small writing-table with chair above it. When the curtain rises the time is about 9 A.M. on a bright winter's morning. The window blind is down, but a sickly white light fills the room. The first thing the audience notices is that the bed has not been slept in. The room has a tidiness that is a little puzzling.*

There is an umbrella and a pretty hat on the bed, and an open dressing-case on the floor by the dressing-table demonstrates that the room is in someone's hire. Then the onlooker becomes conscious of the presence of a woman in the room. She lies where she apparently fell, along the side of the bed, to the L. of it. A leg and a little of her skirt are all that most of the audience can see. The leg is silk stockinged and on the foot is a smart high-heeled shoe. What one can see of the woman is very still. She is perhaps dead. After the rise of the curtain there is a moment's pause. Then knocking commences on the door. The knocker, getting no response from within, produces keys, and their rattle is heard by the audience. The door opens and admits a hotel chambermaid. She looks first at the bed and then in a puzzled way round the room. Soon her eye falls on the prone body of the woman. She draws back, putting her hands to her breasts. Then timorously she approaches the body and looks down at the face. She gives a stifled cry and runs from the room. The audience hear her running down the hotel corridor, crying out as she goes. Another scared-looking chambermaid appears at the open door. She carries a slop-pail. She stands with open mouth gazing at the scene in the bedroom. Now she is joined by a page with a tray bearing tea, which he supports ridiculously with five fingers. Yet another maid runs up, barging into the others so clumsily that the page has to inquire "Where are you comin' to?" They all three stop at the threshold, staring first at the woman and then at the room. Suddenly a guttural

voice raised high is heard ringing through the corridor. It is the voice of MR. STRICK, the German-Swiss manager of the hotel.]

MR. STRICK [*still in the corridor*]. Vich room is it? You absurt girl! Vot makes you tink the lady is kilt? Af you sent for the doctor? [MR. STRICK, *preceded by the chambermaid who gave the original alarm, arrives at the door.*] Out of the way, you goot-for-noding beeples! [*The little knot scatters, admitting MR. STRICK to the room, but reassembles at the doorway after his entrance. The first chambermaid follows him a few paces into the room.* MR. STRICK *is tall, broad, fair and handsome, a lengthy edition of Mr. Sandow. He has a large, fair moustache and plenty of frizzly, fair hair. He is one of the men for whom frock coats are made.*] Vere is the poor lady? Ah, goot gracious! Fetch Dr. Morris at vunce, I tell you.

MAID. He's gone away for the week-end, sir.

MR. STRICK. So he 'as, tam him! (*He bends over the fallen woman.*) Dere is a doctor staying in the hotel. Number 24 on this floor. Ask 'im to come as a great favour. Mind! 'E is a famous man and you must speak to 'im with great—vell, be very 'umble. [*Exit the maid hurriedly.*] Here, you young fool, you 'elp me to lift 'er. [*The page to whom he is speaking, rather unwillingly passes his tray to one of the maids and comes to the manager's assistance. Together they lift the limp figure and carry her to the couch at the foot of the bed.*]

MR. STRICK [*as he carries her*]. She's not dead, poor lady. I can feel 'er moving. [*The audience for the first time see the full-length figure of FELICITY SCARTH. She is*

very fashionably dressed, but her clothes are awry and crushed. Strands of her hair have strayed. Scarlet lips—paint that has almost run—sear her white face. There are lines on a parching skin, and her eyes are rimmed darkly. While admiring the beauty of the woman's figure and the glory of the masses of her hair, one feels sadly that this body's "satis est" has been spoken.]

MR. STRICK. There! She is coming round, poor lady. Thank gootness if she doesn't die and have an inquest. Just when the book-keeper is leaving, too. [*The voice of DR. STRATTON is heard outside.*]

DR. STRATTON. Is this the room?

MR. STRICK. Ah! Come in, if you please, Doctor Stratton. You are ver' kind. [*To the page and maids.*] Now, off you go, all of you, about your pizzness. [*The maids and page flutter out, and the door shuts behind the newcomer.*]

[*DR. STRATTON has a piece of toast in his hand. A little later one notices that he has not quite finished dressing. His waistcoat and trousers belong to a well-cut morning suit, but he wears a flowery dressing jacket and slippers. He is a man of powerful build, with a ready and rather grim smile. Here is a strong man mentally. He looks as if he thinks clearly and cleanly, and has very emphatic opinions. The audience is immediately struck with the contrast between the man's ebullient health and vigour and FELICITY SCARTH'S distracting fragility and physical decadence. The thinking part of the audience—one critic and about two rows of the pit—says to itself:*

“Ah! There wouldn't be that sort of woman if it weren't for that sort of man.”]

DR. STRATTON [*entering*]. Who is ill? Not you, Mr. Strick? [*He munches his toast.*]

MR. STRICK. Ah no, indeed. [*All smiles and hand massage.*] That would be very awkward just now, when I am so short 'anded. This is the poor lady. The book-keeper, you know, 'as given notice and——

DR. STRATTON. Yes. Have you any sal volatile? There is probably some in that dressing-case. [DR. STRATTON *pulls up the blind, admitting bright sunlight into the room, and then goes to the dressing-case, which stands on the floor R., and runs over it with his hand. He finds what he wants, and as he rises from the floor his eye lights on a hypodermic syringe, also in the dressing-case. He picks it up, observes it gravely, and puts it back. He then goes to FELICITY and administers the sal volatile.*]

MR. STRICK. Shall I get 'er some brandy?

DR. STRATTON. No. That's just what she doesn't want. What this young woman principally wants is a severe talking to. I was interrupted in the middle of my breakfast. Do you mind bringing it in?

MR. STRICK. Certainly, Doctor. And let me say 'ow most kind it is of you to relief my anxiety and to take charge of the poor lady. [*He retreats, all becks and nods, in pursuit of the breakfast tray from DR. STRATTON'S bedroom.*]

DR. STRATTON [*shaking FELICITY'S shoulder gently*]. Come, now. Look about you. What have you been doing to yourself? [*The woman starts to whimper in the*

fearful way of one suffering from complete nervous breakdown. The DOCTOR steadies her on the couch, fetches a pillow from the bed and places it under her head. Then he pulls the pins from her hair and lets it fall loose, afterwards spraying her forehead with eau de cologne, which he finds in the dressing-case.]

MR. STRICK [*entering with breakfast tray*]. I do 'ope it is not cold, Doctor. Please let me send you anything you require. [*He puts the tray on the writing-table.*]

DR. STRATTON. I shall ring if I want anything.

MR. STRICK [*with tremendous feeling*]. Thank you, ver' much, Doctor. I would not 'ave troubled you, but for the book-keeper being——

DR. STRATTON [*going impatiently to MR. STRICK at the door*]. Oh, damn the book-keeper! [*MR. STRICK giggles loudly in a high falsetto and exit with much bowing and hand-rubbing.*]

FELICITY. Who said "damn"?

DR. STRATTON. Hello! You're coming round. That's good.

FELICITY. I don't know you.

DR. STRATTON. You don't. And I don't know you. What is your name?

FELICITY. Felicity Scarth.

DR. STRATTON. Married? [*The woman pushes out her left hand almost contemptuously. There are no rings on it.*]

Ah, yes. I never think of those clues.

FELICITY. Who are you?

DR. STRATTON. A doctor. Name—Stratton. [*He is now at the little writing-table pouring out coffee.*]

FELICITY. What the devil are you doing?

DR. STRATTON. Having breakfast.

FELICITY [*after a pause*]. It's immoral. I'm either in your bedroom or you're in mine.

DR. STRATTON. I'm in yours. It isn't immoral. I'm a doctor.

FELICITY. I never heard of a doctor bringing his breakfast with him.

DR. STRATTON. Hooray! You're getting back your mentality. [*He picks up a club sandwich, bites it healthily and chews it with gusto.*]

FELICITY. It's very odd.

DR. STRATTON. Part of the treatment, Miss Scarth. Part of the treatment. If I had sat by your side in a morning coat and asked you to put out your tongue, do you know what you would have done?

FELICITY. No.

DR. STRATTON. You'd have said "Good God! It's the Doctor!" and you'd have relapsed into a state of coma.

FELICITY. I believe I should.

DR. STRATTON. I know it. It was by the discovery of those little idiosyncrasies of the female composition that I made myself wealthy and was able to retire from practice at the age of forty.

FELICITY. You've retired. Then I'm sure it's immoral your being here.

DR. STRATTON. No. The doctor attached to the hotel is away for the week end. In the circumstances—and I was told they were very urgent—I consented to again make a farewell professional appearance.

FELICITY. Then this is a hotel.

DR. STRATTON. Yes. Don't you live here?

FELICITY. No. Oh, I'm beginning to remember things now.

DR. STRATTON. Of course. You'll be quite all right when you've eaten something. Have a club sandwich.

FELICITY. I'd rather have a little brandy.

DR. STRATTON. If you ask for brandy, I abandon the case. Bacon and egg and watercress, this is. Bite it. Just as intoxicating as alcohol and much better physical exercise. [*She takes the sandwich listlessly and pecks at it.*]

FELICITY. What's the matter with me?

DR. STRATTON. Indigestion.

FELICITY [*almost sitting up*]. Indigestion!

DR. STRATTON. Yes. Supposed to be a stomachic complaint, but really nothing of the sort. You are suffering from indigestion of the brain. Every one who suffers from indigestion belongs to the middle classes, so that I knew at once you were my social equal and I had no qualms about breakfasting with you. Coffee? [*He holds up the coffee-pot to her.*]

FELICITY. You're fooling me.

DR. STRATTON. Not at all. Indigestion is caused by excessive thinking and mental labour. The upper classes and the lower classes never think, never labour mentally. Therefore indigestion is practically confined to the middle class, you and I. Move your feet. I'll sit beside you. [*She makes way for him, almost smiling.*]

FELICITY. Middle class, eh? No one has ever said anything so quaint to me before. Can you guess who I am?

DR. STRATTON. You are either the principal of a Jermyn Street Nursing Home or a released suffragette.

FELICITY. I am Felicity Scarth, aged thirty-four, alone in the world, balance of a small fortune left, no occupation save the pursuit of pleasure, and alive at this moment only by the grace of God and the rascality of— Bother them! I'll let them have a piece of my mind now. [*She rises to her feet with the intention of going to the telephone, but she stumbles and is glad to sit down again.*]

DR. STRATTON. Ah! You're in too much of a hurry. What were you going to do?

FELICITY. Telephone. Never mind. It doesn't matter. You know—you mustn't laugh—just for a moment I felt like a mermaid. I see it's because I couldn't walk and my hair is all down. How did that happen?

DR. STRATTON. I took it down before you came to. There is a good deal of it, and I fancy it was pressing on your head.

FELICITY [*after a pleasant pause*]. How nice! Although you're only a doctor, there is something quite soothing about the idea of your taking down my hair when I was unconscious. I feel quite interesting.

DR. STRATTON. You can't imagine how nasty you looked with your hair up.

FELICITY. I daresay I did. When I was at the convent the cricket matches used always to be between girls with their hair up and girls with their hair down. I always used to keep mine down, and the uppers were furious because I was the swiftest bowler in the school. I'd love to have lived somewhere where I could always have had my hair down.

DR. STRATTON. I don't want to hurry you, but you seem to be making quite a rapid recovery. Tell me what brought you to this state.

FELICITY. Why should I?

DR. STRATTON. Probably I can cure you if you are perfectly frank.

FELICITY. Prove that you're a doctor. Where's your stethoscope?

DR. STRATTON. Oh, hang it. Look here. [*He pulls some letters from the pocket of his dressing jacket.*] There's my name on all the envelopes, followed by initials that ought to convince anybody that I'm crammed with shibboleths, at any rate.

FELICITY. Right. I accept the evidence. But what if I don't want to be cured.

DR. STRATTON. That is what I suspect.

FELICITY. You are right. . . I don't. . . I'm finished.

DR. STRATTON. You mean that you think your body will stand no more.

FELICITY. I don't want it to stand any more. [*She rises as if to get away from him, and stands leaning on the R. end of the couch. He is still seated looking up at her.*]

DR. STRATTON. What has life given you?

FELICITY. Its best, I think.

DR. STRATTON. It has done its worst with you.

FELICITY. Yes. I faced it with the wrong equipment. I suppose I am, as you say, a middle-class girl, but my money took me into the best Society. We probably have many mutual friends.

DR. STRATTON. Yes. You surely made friends that counted. Wasn't there someone to put on the brake?

FELICITY. One or two tried, but my money usually bought complaisance. Pay a Puritan's bridge debts and he'll soon find excuses for your hedonism.

DR. STRATTON. Have you no guardians?

FELICITY. My parents both died when I was twenty-one. Practically up to that stage I had lived in the bosom of a religious community. I was blindfolded in the years when I should have been allowed to see. What a life! What a life! Driven gently without bearing-rein, from marble pillar to fumed oak post. Human beings to me were people who ate and drank to please their bodies and read about heaven and hell to please their souls. I knew that they died. I used to revel in that. There is such a tremendous tribute to religion, don't you think, in an untimely death?

DR. STRATTON. H'm. It's an idea I'm afraid I can't appreciate. [*There is a pause.*] Do tell me more, and don't ask me questions.

FELICITY. I found myself alone in the world at the age of twenty-one; alone, rich and attractive. In six months I had discovered the multiplicity of sensations that a hungry woman may experience. Spiritual culture had always soothed me. Physical understanding in its sudden, fierce inrush shattered my individuality. [*She hides her face in her hands.*] I was as a sponge for water, fuel for fire, lint for blood. [*A pause.* DR. STRATTON rises and goes down L. FELICITY seats herself again on the ottoman.] I played at coquetry; tasted sensuous idolatry. I had a power over men, and I rioted in it. The male! The male! Just suddenly to come! The male! A new sex. There was I, till then un-sexed.

Men of muscle, men of brain! How they fascinated me!

DR. STRATTON. When and where did this happen?

FELICITY. Monte Carlo! Languor — flowers — the newest sins. Chamonix! Ah, the electric massage of that air, the skate, the tingling scald of the snow. Paris, musically clattering and callous in its vice. New York, its glitter and its men who are always children, and then the caressing comfort of London and its wonderful people, strong and finely cultured. I banqueted on the sweets of the world. Life was a warm stream. I thought I could bathe in it for ever without weariness.

DR. STRATTON. And then?

FELICITY. Then the body began its protest. I ignored it. Angrily it wrote deep lines on my parching skin, brought me to my knees with blows that meant sickness. My hair showed signs of discoloration. I could feel that the pace of my blood was slackening.

DR. STRATTON. And so you went to drugs?

FELICITY. Yes. And to cunning skin doctors, to——

DR. STRATTON. Pah! Ever to Nature?

FELICITY. Sometimes.

DR. STRATTON. Saturdays to Mondays, I suppose, eh?

FELICITY [*nearly smiling*]. I am afraid it was no more.

DR. STRATTON. It's bad hearing. The end came, of course, just recently. "The *quick* fall of the outcast" — you know the line.

FELICITY. H'm. I wasn't outcast. I rather imagine that I have been the most popular woman in Society.

DR. STRATTON. Where do you live?

FELICITY. On a 'bus route, I'm really the only fashionable woman living on a 'bus route, but it is the dearest house.

DR. STRATTON. Then how does it come about that you are here?

FELICITY. What is to-day?

DR. STRATTON. Monday morning.

FELICITY. I came here last night, yes, on Sunday night. What a week it has been! Last Monday I bought a book on poisons.

DR. STRATTON [*his professional curiosity aroused*]. Whose? Blyth? Mann? Luff?

FELICITY. I forget. It was stupid reading. On Tuesday I went to two piano recitals. They soothed me a little, but there was a dreadful man at the evening show who sang "Traditional English Folk Songs." You know the sort of thing. Each of the twenty-four verses finished up with a refrain like this—"With my doodleum—dollicum—doodleums day."

DR. STRATTON. Yes. And you are asked to join in the chorus.

FELICITY. Quite right. I didn't.

DR. STRATTON [*eager to keep her to the topic because he sees her sense of humour and realises the value of reviving it*]. Do you know the one in which every verse finishes up—"Oh no, John, no John, no-o, John, no!"

FELICITY. Yes, he sang that.

DR. STRATTON. Poor thing! Did anybody sing the Jewel song from *Faust*?

FELICITY. Yes. Were you there?

DR. STRATTON. No. But I know that sort of concert.

It always makes me think of those suburban parties where somebody recites "Gunga Din."

FELICITY. Yes. And he's always a gentleman who wears spectacles.

DR. STRATTON. Exactly. [*They laugh together. The laugh dwindles into gravity.*] What did you do on Wednesday?

FELICITY. I stayed in bed. I fell down when I tried to get up. My feet tingled as if they had been stung by nettles. My skin was cold, and creepy waves ran over it. I had nothing in my head and if I shut my eyes I visualised grinning horrors.

DR. STRATTON. Yes. It was very near the end.

FELICITY. On Thursday I was better and I bought a lot of sweets and this hat—[*she gets it from the bed*]—Maison Parmentier—seventeen guineas. It is the sort of hat that one would like a man to buy for one. Do you understand that?

DR. STRATTON. Yes. A light-headed phase . . . Some women would have gone for a motor scorch.

FELICITY. I also bought the prettiest silver-plated pistol you ever saw. Oh, I simply must talk to them about it. [*She goes to the telephone and consults the book.*]

DR. STRATTON. Pistol? . . . What are you going to do?

FELICITY. Wait a minute. 7004 Holborn.

DR. STRATTON. I'm going to ring for another club sandwich.

FELICITY. Not for me, thank you. Yes, 7004 Holborn. No, not Brixton. Holborn. . . . Is that Coghill and Davis? I'm Miss Scarth. Miss Scarth. I bought a

revolver at your shop on Thursday afternoon last . . .
Yes . . . I paid £6 5s. for it. You remember? . . .
Well, it won't go off.

DR. STRATTON. What?

FELICITY. I say it won't go off. I've tried it and it missed fire. . . . Very well, I'll bring it round. You will have to change it.

DR. STRATTON. What does this mean?

FELICITY [*coming back to the couch*]. Where was I? Oh, Thursday! Well, Friday I spent with the Wapshares.

DR. STRATTON. Ah, you know the Wapshares?

FELICITY. Yes. They took me to a musical comedy that evening. It was like drinking eau sucré for the toothache. Saturday I spent in a cold and very dirty church. I tried to get back to the atmosphere of the days before I was twenty-one. But all the time it eluded me. I seemed to be remembering the thoughts and deeds of another person. I am sure I have become another person. Sunday, yesterday, was very terrible. I was very near to madness, separated from it only by the sound of the click of a watch lid.

DR. STRATTON. I understand that.

FELICITY. I felt that if I did not go mad I should decay. Then the end of my money would come and I would die in coarse clothing and a harsh environment instead of in silk and with every convenience.

DR. STRATTON [*smiling*]. I'm sure you laughed when you thought of that.

FELICITY. I did. I began to get quite cheerful about the idea of killing myself. I felt so happy about it

that I thought I must hasten to die. I dreaded the return of the mood when I feared death. I packed that dressing-case on Sunday evening and came here. I could have done it at home, but it would have injured the landlord and he's been so good about the paint and the roof going wrong. When I got here I thought I would undress, but after I had loaded the pistol I lost that feeling. I just took off my hat. Then I sat down in front of the mirror and held the pistol to my mouth. But the reflection in the glass reminded me of a poster of a melodrama so I turned the mirror round. Then I sat on the bed over there [*pointing to the L. of the bed*] and put the pistol in my mouth. My chatelaine bag burst open and some coins fell out. They rolled and rolled and made me feel dizzy. I had to put the pistol down till they stopped rolling. One coin went under the wardrobe there and circled and circled and then it vibrated noisily. The pain it made in my head was awful. My heart was thudding against my corsets. My head was empty. The tip of my tongue was in the barrel of the pistol and it was dry and the cold steel burnt it. Then the thing clicked, oh so sharply, so fiercely, and my strength went out and I suppose I swooned. Where did they find me?

DR. STRATTON. Along the side of the bed there. I heard nothing of any revolver. [*He looks under the bed and under the couch. Then he takes the umbrella from the bed and with the crook of it fishes out a silver-plated revolver. He examines it gingerly.*] You bit on the barrel. There are your teeth marks. [*She looks at it interestedly, while he is careful to keep the muzzle pointed*

to the floor. He opens the weapon.] You pulled on an empty chamber. All but one are loaded.

FELICITY. Then it isn't out of order? Good. Give it to me back, please.

DR. STRATTON. Not if I know it.

FELICITY. It is mine. You need not be nervous. I shan't use it in your presence or here now, in any case. (*He pulls out the cartridges, puts them in one pocket, shuts the revolver and puts it in the other.*) Dr. Stratton, that is my property.

DR. STRATTON. I've a good mind to have you arrested for attempting suicide.

FELICITY [*taken aback*]. Eh?

DR. STRATTON. You despicable little coward! You, with your youth, with your figure, with your hair, nary a switch at the age of thirty-four, to try to sneak out of life in this way. And why, in Heaven's name! Because for a dozen years or so you have gone the pace too fast and your body has protested. The impudence—the sheer brazen impudence of it. You women are getting worse and worse every day. You abandoned the ten commandments ages ago, I know; but since then you've invented a perverted code of morality that is a nuisance, a damned nuisance, to our sex. Shoot yourself, indeed! Who is going to clear up the mess? A man. A woman faints at the sight of blood. Who is going to sit on your body and give a verdict at the inquest! Men. Men are to be taken away from their work at busy hours to listen to evidence about your life history. Not women, mind you, not idle, loafing women. It is the men that have got to endure the unsavoury business. Who is going to

get the blame for your action? Not you. No one will blame you. No. Your corpse will be put on a Clement's Inn pike and waved at us for weeks by your own sex as an example of the iniquity of man. Kill yourself if you like, you selfish, hard-hearted, malicious little cat, but don't flatter yourself that you've secured a triumph. It is women like you, women who do what you threaten to do, who will one day be the cause of a general uprising of manhood. Men will combine against your tyranny, strike out for themselves, organise to——

FELICITY. I'm sure I heard all that in a play long ago.

DR. STRATTON. Nothing of the sort. It's a new movement. I made my reputation as a specialist in the nervous diseases of women, and for that reason I shall be in the forefront of the coming battle.

FELICITY [*wearily*]. Please don't talk to me about the Independence of the Male. It's so—so Edwardian.

DR. STRATTON. Well, hang the general principle. I'll stick to your individual case. Think of it. You begin with twenty-one years of comfort, culture and health. You are equipped for a good long battle with the world, the flesh and the devil. In twelve years you conquer the world, surrender to the flesh, and telephone for the devil. Why, you've got enough life and strength and go in you for another ten years' debauchery, let alone any other mode of life. You must be a weakling mentally not to see it for yourself.

FELICITY. I don't like the word "debauchery."

DR. STRATTON. That's what it was, even though you didn't lose your reputation.

FELICITY. What do you propose I should do?

DR. STRATTON. Go back to Nature. You can't go back to the state you occupied in the pre-twenty-one days. Go back to Nature.

FELICITY [*laughing hysterically*]. A country cottage and a lot of damned nightingales.

DR. STRATTON. Nothing of the sort. Nature. Work. Brown earth. Potatoes. Sand. Trees. Fresh air. Weak tea. None of your China or Russian muck. The roast tea of old England. Sleep. Hunger. Coarse bread. Boiled onions. Wind and rain. Sea-wrack. Have you ever smelt sea-wrack? Start away on it. Lie on it. Rub your nose in it. It's awful, but it would be Heaven for you. Your nostrils are steeped in the salt stink of champagne. Snort it out. Go and smell Nature. It's sometimes just as pungent.

FELICITY [*after a contemptuous pause*]. Ugh! You swaggerer. You typical, bouncing, bragging, boisterous Englishman. Just because you've looked after yourself, had your cold bath every morning and kept clear of the body-destroying vices, so that at the age of—say—forty-five you can shoot straight with a gun or a billiard cue, you think you are qualified to advise women. Why doesn't God petrify you into a finger-post pointing the way to salvation? It would be so helpful.

DR. STRATTON. Thank you. My advice is valuable—that is to say, it has a market value. I wish you good morning.

FELICITY. Stop! . . . Why am I going to take you into my confidence? Why? Why? Why? [*She is almost shouting angrily.*]

DR. STRATTON. Remember, I don't ask for it

FELICITY. That's the very reason I'm going to thrust it on you. You take me for granted. You imagine you have summed me up in one look. That is why I am going to take the trouble to show you what a highly qualified ignoramus you are.

DR. STRATTON. Hours of consultation 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. Saturdays 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. Fourteen years! Did I waste all that time? [*He speaks to himself, ruminatively.*]

FELICITY. Are you a married man?

DR. STRATTON. No.

FELICITY. Have you any children?

DR. STRATTON. Well—really, Miss Scarth!

FELICITY. Don't blush—or wriggle. I'm not married and I have.

DR. STRATTON. Indeed!

FELICITY. "Indeed"! Why not "Good luck!" "How many?" "Boy or girl?" or "Who's the father?"

DR. STRATTON. My brain doesn't travel as quickly as that. I'm a public-school boy.

FELICITY. Oh, I'm not sneering. A polytechnic socialist wouldn't have said anything less idiotic.

DR. STRATTON. Thank you.

FELICITY. I am a mother. I have been a mother for over sixteen years. I have a child whom I have never seen. I don't know the sex? I don't know the name of the father. I only knew him for a few summer hours when I was a girl. I was utterly ignorant then, as I have told you. My father and mother nearly died of shame when they discovered what had happened. But they lived for three years longer, spending their time almost happily, throwing Bossuet's Sermons and the

Bible at my head. It was an abridged edition of the Bible. Then they did die, prematurely. My fault! Died in wretchedness and shame because I had created life. The child was dragged away from my bed. I never opened my eyes on it. Money was spent lavishly to hide my child. It was spent very cleverly. I have never been able to find it.

DR. STRATTON. I begin to understand.

FELICITY. I have searched. Oh, how I have searched! My child! Part of me. God made woman incomplete. To her he said, "You shall find the joy of completion in the world." I don't believe there is a Heaven for women. God has given it to us here in motherhood. And they took mine away. They took mine away. My fulfilment. My completion. The world said that I was to be driven mad by its pet method. Let her join the thousands of other women in the asylums that are there for the same reason. Sneak her child away and destroy her equilibrium. Drive her mad, drive her mad. The little fool hasn't got a wedding ring.

DR. STRATTON. It was very hard, but you only look at it from one angle, you know.

FELICITY. I know that. There's my angle, the angle of the mother. There's the second angle, the angle of my parents, relations and friends who have to endure social unpleasantness. There's the third angle of the child itself——

DR. STRATTON. And that is where we should all group ourselves.

FELICITY. There's the fourth angle of the damned fool of a clergyman, reverently asking God in his mercy

to destroy the baby's life. There's the fifth angle of the blackguardly family doctor who tells of what he might have done had he known in time. Oh, there are a score of angles.

DR. STRATTON. And when the matter has been looked at all ways, one is bound to the conclusion that the child must be considered first.

FELICITY. That is the world's view. Oh, the vile cruelty of it! The cruel, inhuman philosophy that instituted the foundling hospital and expanded the lunatic asylum. And you can defend it? You can find it in your senses to declare that the child can do without the mother, and the mother can do without her child. You, and thousands like you, think that the act of giving birth is sufficient for the woman. I tell you that the child is necessary to the woman, that unless she has her child her life is empty, and emptiness is the primary stage of madness. The nearness, the constant companionship of that little morsel of flesh is absolutely and utterly essential to her, as indispensable as her heart or her brain. It isn't till a woman has a child that her life begins. And yet in our social system if a child is born out of wedlock every one conspires to starve the life of the mother. The child is her life. It is taken away. She is robbed of her equilibrium. That is the only word I can find for it. And she either goes mad or goes to the devil.

DR. STRATTON. What you say is desperately true. But it is often the finest social economy to exploit what is false. You say that the child should have been left in your arms because it was necessary to you. But, humane as that theory may sound, it is a superficial humanity.

Doesn't your imagination suggest to you the outcome of such a revolution in social custom?

FELICITY. I am right because I feel that I am right. I can't go through the world alone. I won't—I won't go on. No man has loved me. No man can love me now. I wanted—I want maternity, to mother a husband—to mother children. I have tried to kill the instinct, but it is impossible. And all the time I am conscious of the existence of my child—somewhere unknown. I have searched the world. Every failure drove me further down. Oh, I know you're right when you say this physical decay is curable. Nature would be cruel enough to restore my health for many more years of agony. I can be strong and perhaps beautiful again. But spiritually I am dead. Oh, my child—my baby! [*She is crying. Suddenly she rises and faces him, speaking with fierce appeal.*] Don't argue with me. Don't try to stop me. I'm a case for euthanasia. Let me go away and die. [*He goes to her and puts his arms on her shoulders soothingly. She bends her head and almost approaches him. The tenderness of this strong man is almost too much for her.*]

DR. STRATTON. You think clearly and you see clearly. You are so sure of yourself that I shall not contradict you again. You say that you feel you are right. I believe that. No one else's views matter in that happy case. But will you listen to me for a few moments? [*She sits on the ottoman.*] I am a father. My child died a few days after birth. I was a youngster when it happened, and I had to go to my parents. My father paid. He gave the woman a large sum of money, and I never saw her again. And now I come to think of it, in my

case there was a damned fool of a clergyman, as you would say, who told my mother in my presence how grateful we should all be to God for mercifully allowing the child to die. What you have said to me this morning tortures my conscience. Does that woman of mine suffer as you suffer?

FELICITY. She may. On the other hand, she may have married and have other children.

DR. STRATTON. Yes. But the odds are that it is quite the other way. You say you have searched for your child and failed. Suppose you were to find it! Would you be happy?

FELICITY. Life would be all happiness.

DR. STRATTON. Ah! Suppose the child disappointed you! Suppose it proved to be the kind of child that you would turn from in aversion.

FELICITY. The pleasure would be greater than the pain. I would never turn away in aversion. The normal mother couldn't do that.

DR. STRATTON. Do you realise that the child might turn away from you?

FELICITY [*looking at him a little bewildered*]. I never thought of that. That would be worse than never finding the child.

DR. STRATTON. Exactly. If it were possible, you would not like to meet your child as you are now.

FELICITY. No. Not just as I am now.

DR. STRATTON. Then take my advice. Go away to Nature. I will tell you where. In the meantime, I will try to find your child.

FELICITY. You will . . . do . . . that?

DR. STRATTON. Yes. I shall feel that I am making some atonement for a cruelty in my youth, a cruelty that has been left for you to bring home to me. I may fail as you have failed, but a doctor—and especially one in my position—can unlock secrets of that sort where money would be useless.

FELICITY. Yes. That is true. That is true. And you will really do this for me?

DR. STRATTON [*gravely*]. I will do it—for my own peace of mind. [*She passionately takes his hands and kisses them, almost falling at his feet.*] Don't thank me unless I succeed—and even then be prepared for disappointment. Go home now, and send me every particular of the birth you can remember. Then be ready in a week's time to go where I send you. I will find a corner of the earth that will give you back health and strength if you follow my directions. Good-bye. [*Holding out his hand.*] It has been a privilege to meet you. [*She rises and takes his hand gravely.*]

FELICITY. Oh, why—why are you doing this splendid thing?

DR. STRATTON. I also am asking myself a question something like that. The odd part of it is that neither of us has courage now to frame what is the probable answer. Good-bye. [*He shakes her hand firmly and goes to the door, leaving the room leisurely and in a very matter of fact way.* FELICITY stands watching him. When the door has clicked behind him, she seats herself again on the couch, and clutches her aching head in her hands. Presently she rises wearily and goes to the dressing-table R. She seats herself in the chair before it, and, bending

down, takes from the dressing case on the floor the hypodermic syringe which DR. STRATTON had handled earlier in the act. Next she ferrets out a drug vial and fills her syringe. She does all this clumsily, as if weak from over-exertion and unusual emotion. She is about to inject the drug when a sudden revulsion of feeling overtakes her. She springs to her feet, galvanised, for a moment almost stiff. Then she flings the syringe across the room and breaks it into splinters.]

FELICITY [*throwing herself, sobbing hysterically, on the ottoman*]. My baby, my baby, my baby!

CURTAIN.

ACT II

PETIT BOT BAY, GUERNSEY.

[*The stage is covered with a rock floor, moss peeping through crevices. This crude platform is flanked by masses of bracken-covered rock. In the mass on the right a rude stairway has been cut, and over the mass on the left is an ill-defined path. In the distance is seen the other side of the inlet, a great fern-smearred cliff, in which there is but one shelving platform, occupied by a Martello tower. The sea is not seen, but is heard placidly caressing the beach shingle below. Down R. are some fishermen's baskets and down L. an upturned rowing boat. In the centre, peeping over the edge of the rock platform is the top of an iron ladder leading down to the sea. Left and right of it are iron rings fixed in the rock to which ropes are fastened. These ropes connect with small fishing boats anchored in the water below. It is a warm and intensely quiet summer afternoon. When the curtain rises TOM DENNY is discovered applying paint to the keel of the upturned boat. TOM is a short, sturdy fisherman of about fifty years of age. He is a little too old and too fat now for sea-going, and is, as a matter of fact, at the time night-watchman at the Guernsey water-*

works. He is an Irishman, though his vagrant life has deprived his accent of some of the brogue. He has a grizzled moustache and his hair is plentiful. He wears rusty blue serge trousers and a blue jersey. His feet are bare. At the foot of the roughly-hewn steps on the right sits LIEUT. CARMICHAEL WHITHAIR, *a healthy-looking young subaltern of twenty-four years of age. He should not have a moustache, but he has, because it is the thing in the Army. He is dressed in dark lounge jacket and vest, white flannel trousers and white shoes. His manner in conversation indicates that he has a great respect and affection for* TOM DENNY.]

CARMICHAEL. Why in thunder are you always painting that wretched old boat, Tom? It'll never float again.

TOM. And don't I know that, sir. But I'll go on painting the boat for many a long day yet. It's the only way I have of relieving my feelings. Whenever I have a row with Mrs. Denny I come out and paint the boat. It's better than getting drunk.

CARMICHAEL. And you're always painting it when I want something to sit on. [*He goes to the edge of the platform and looks down on the water.*] Beautifully quiet, isn't it?

TOM. Yes, sir. Reminds me of the days when we were runnin' from Messina to the African coast. Aye, those were days. A beautiful trip, but sometimes not a breath o' real wind for days on end. Oil we was fetchin', water for oil. Yes, sounds queer, b'David, it does, nowadays.

We took fresh water from the Spaniards and the niggers gave us oil for it. But it weren't so payin' as it sounds. But it was a lovely trip—lovely, real sorft time, puddin' for dinner, Lord knows what. Yes, I used to call the Queen my aunt in those days.

CARMICHAEL [*who has gone to the edge of the platform and is looking out on the water*]. Who's that down there, Tommy?

TOM [*leaving his painting and looking over the cliff*]. That's Jerry Le Maitre. He's been clearing his pots, I reckon. He's pulling up his safe pot now.

CARMICHAEL. What's his safe pot?

TOM. Well, it's a sort of big crate we each keep in the bay to store the shellfish till market day comes round. Bless me heart, he's done well to-day. Look at that. That's a big crayfish. Did you hear it plunk. That's a lobster. Were those the first he put in? That's another lobster. . . . That's a crab. How many's that? Four—five—six. . . . The little devil! He's got the luck of a priest.

[TOM goes back to his paintings.]

CARMICHAEL [*who remains to count the shellfish*]. He put in a dozen altogether.

TOM. A dozen, eh? And, mark you, when he comes up here he'll say he's got nothin'. He's the wickedest little liar I ever come across.

CARMICHAEL. Doesn't he live with you, Tom?

TOM. Yes, bad cess to him.

CARMICHAEL. Some people think he's your son.

TOM. Well—he ain't. I'll tell you what he is, Mr. Whithair—although I don't know you're old enough to hear it—he is a love-child.

CARMICHAEL. A what?

TOM. A love-child. He ain't got no father nor mother. I had a bad time once, a very bad time—it was my leg that did it—and they offered us a fairish lump of money to take that boy when he was a baby. I was against it. But my missus says we must have the money. A lot of good he's been to us. He's a liar, Mr. Whithair, and that ain't natural for a man that works on the sea, and I'm not so sure that he don't steal.

CARMICHAEL. You didn't give him your name.

TOM. Not likely. I gave him the first name that came in my head. There was a man called Le Maitre on the coast-guard at Plymouth once what hit me over the head with an oar. So I calls this young devil's spit Le Maitre. Good enough for him I reckon.

CARMICHAEL. How does he get on with Miss Scarth?

TOM. Well, she seems to take quite an interest in him. But she's that good-hearted, bless you, she'd have a kind word for a Belfast Protestant.

CARMICHAEL. Has she been here very long?

TOM. Lemme see. It 'ud be about eighteen months. Yes, it was one day in January she came and saw my missus and asked if she could have a couple of rooms. You ought to have seen her then, Mr. Whithair.

CARMICHAEL. Why?

TOM. Well, I reckon she'd had foul weather for a very long voyage. She was that battered I never thought she'd sail again.

CARMICHAEL. Ill?

TOM. Ill, is it? She looked hopeless. And look at her now. There's a real figure of a woman for you.

That's the result of hard work, Mr. Whithair, hard work, fresh air and plain grub. You've seen her handle a boat, haven't you? Yes. I taught her. Have you seen her swim? No. It's just as well for your peace of mind you haven't, neither. You're a bit touched on her, now, aren't you, Mr. Whithair?

CARMICHAEL. Here, I say, Tom, steady!

TOM. Oh, don't mind my chaff. I'm getting old, sir, but I've got a wholesome sort of respect for a likely young feller that picks out a handsome girl. If Miss Maisie Bretherton hadn't been as pretty as a picture, you wouldn't have got engaged to her. The Almighty didn't make no mistake when he put in your pair of eyes.

CARMICHAEL. Any ass can see how handsome Miss Scarth is.

TOM. But she ain't only handsome. She's as clever as paint. Look here. [*He goes up to CARMICHAEL and almost digs him with the paint brush.*] Me and my missus have taken in the "News of the World" now for—well, as long as I can remember. But Lord bless you, sir, I'd sooner hear that lady talk than read half the papers every day. The other day I says to her "Miss Scarth, what about this votes for women. D'you want a vote?" She says "Tommy," she says, "the first thing is not to give the women the vote, but to take it away from two-thirds of the men what has got it." What do you think of that? You'll never find anything half as sharp as that in the "News of the World," not if—well, not if you knew what all the long words meant. [*He goes back to his painting.*]

CARMICHAEL. Where is she now?

TOM. Where is she now? You're a caution. You know she's out fishin', and you know she's about due back. That's why you're here.

CARMICHAEL. Tommy, I'll punch your head.

TOM. Punch away, Mr. Whithair. It's a very good thing you're an army officer, or you wouldn't have time to dawdle about here so much.

CARMICHAEL. Tom, have you heard that we're going to be shifted?

TOM. No. Is that so?

CARMICHAEL. Yes. We've got to change places with the battalion at Aden. We go next week.

TOM. Well, I am sorry, Mr. Whithair. I am sorry. Can't you get an exchange?

CARMICHAEL. Well, I might. But it would be rather snidey.

TOM. Rather what?

CARMICHAEL. Rather snidey. The governor wouldn't like it for one thing. [*The iron ladder is heard to creak, and soon the head of JERRY LE MAITRE appears over the edge of the platform. He is a handsome lad of about twenty, very brown, white teeth, fine eyes. He wears shabby blue trousers and jersey, and over his shoulder is a fishing basket. His feet are bare. In his hand he has the end of the rope attached to his boat.*]

TOM. Any luck, JERRY?

JERRY [*as he climbs on the platform and ties the rope on one of the rings*]. Ah no, no. [*JERRY speaks with a soft Irish accent picked up from his foster-parents. Fishing's very bad, very bad. TOM winks at CARMICHAEL, and JERRY leisurely makes his way off R. via the steps.*]

TOM [*succinctly*]. Liar! . . . And now he'll waste the rest of his day reading some trashy book.

CARMICHAEL. I can never get him to talk to me.

TOM. He's mad, sir. All these love-children are. I've seen him sittin' on the rocks out at the point, talkin' to himself and laughin'. He's crazy about the sea. When he's out fishin' alone, he sits there with the lines in his hands smilin' and mumblin' away to himself. And yet my missus can't get "yes" or "no" out of him. He once told her that I was an old fool. That shows he's mad.

CARMICHAEL. There was a johnny in our regiment who used to jaw to himself, so we ragged him out of it.

TOM. Quite right. And do you know what has turned him mad—mostly? I reckon he was born potty, but he's got worse through readin'. He pays for a paper they call "The New Age" and he's bought books that must have cost him five or six francs each. There's one by Wells, is it, and one with a green and gold cover. There's another by Chesterton, and oh! heaps of 'em. And not a damned picture in the lot! I brought him up to be a holy Roman and do you know what he calls himself now? A Buddhist. He goes to Mass all right because I'd knock his head off if he didn't. But he's a Buddhist, and Father Delamarter thinks he ought to be in the asylum.

[*Enter from R. down the steps MAISIE BRETHERTON followed by MRS. BRETHERTON. MAISIE is a slim and pretty girl of about eighteen. She is very sure of herself, realizes that she has a nice figure and is careful to*

define it when choosing her clothes. She will be a feminist when she has found out that kissing and canoodling do not suit her temperament. So far she has been kissed, and then rather decorously, by CARMICHAEL WHITHAIR, her fiancé, only. She carries towels and bathing costume. MRS. BRETHERTON is one of the over-ruled mothers, sweet-natured and homely. One of her active brain cells contains a sense of humour. She is dressed to represent the widow of a deceased Army Colonel, living in Guernsey to avoid income-tax. She also carries towels and bathing costume.]

MAISIE [*in suprised tones and very coolly*]. Good afternoon, Car. I thought you could not leave the barracks on Wednesday afternoons. . . . Good afternoon, Tom.

TOM. Good afternoon, Miss Bretherton.

CARMICHAEL. Begged off to-day, Maisie. Too hot to be dutiful.

MAISIE. It didn't occur to you to let me know, I suppose.

CARMICHAEL [*going to her and taking her arm in his*]. Don't scold me, Maisie. I'll come and bore you at dinner to-night. [*She is only very slightly mollified.*] Going bathing, Mrs. Bretherton?

MRS. BRETHERTON. Now, that's the sort of question that annoys me. Couldn't you tell from the fact that we are carrying these distortions [*waving bathing costume*] that we are going bathing? Such an unnecessary question on a hot day. Though, as a matter of fact, I

am not going bathing. I have never bathed in the sea in my life. But my daughter always insists on my bringing these tiresome things. She hopes to lure me in one day. I defy her to. I hate the sea. It's so vulgar.

CARMICHAEL. Vulgar, Mrs. Bretherton!

MRS. BRETHERTON. Yes, vulgar. There's such a lot of it. And it seems to me to be always sneering. It can do what it likes with us, and I'm bothered if I'll be patronised by it.

MAISIE. In her secret thoughts, mother is always imagining that she will be attacked by a lobster or a crab.

CARMICHAEL [*laughing*]. Are you going out as far as the Point?

MAISIE. Yes. I can get a dive there. Will you be here when we come back?

CARMICHAEL. I hardly think I shall, Maisie. You see I—— [*The head and shoulders of FELICITY SCARTH appear at the edge of the platform.*]

MAISIE [*noticing FELICITY'S arrival*]. Oh, you'll be here, I think. [*MAISIE breaks away from CARMICHAEL with a meaning look into his face.*]

[*FELICITY SCARTH climbs on to platform, waving aside CARMICHAEL'S proffered help. She carries a rope-end in her hand as JERRY did and fastens it in sailor-like fashion to one of the rings. She is a picture of robust health and high coloured beauty. She wears a jersey and short skirt, with strong boot and leggings. Her hands, neck and face are burnt brown. She is bare headed and her hair is dressed very simply.*]

She presents a fresh and wholesome aspect. When the play is produced in NEW YORK the American critics should call her a pulchritudinous apparition! There is no trace of the decadence or even the exotic charm that equipped her eighteen months before. MAISIE is a healthy young woman, but she hasn't the "atmosphere" of FELICITY SCARTH. The latter suggests sea foam and crisp winds, while MAISIE is a nice sort of golfing girl with—possibly—a powder puff at the top of her silk stocking. Slung over FELICITY'S shoulder is a fishing creel.]

FELICITY. Good afternoon, everybody. Do you want to buy any fish? There are simply millions of mackerel off the Point this morning.

MRS. BRETHERTON. And that's where my daughter wants me to bathe!

FELICITY [*reproachfully*]. Tom, you've been painting the boat.

TOM. True for you, ma'am. Give me the basket. I'm going off home now to make it up.

FELICITY. That's right, Tom, and thank you so much. [*She takes off her basket and gives it to him.*]

TOM [*looking at the fish*]. Nice looking lot. Can't understand anybody eating them, though.

CARMICHAEL. Why not, Tom?

TOM [*going off R. up the steps*]. Too many bones. [*Exit carrying creel and paint-pot.*]

FELICITY. Tom is a funny fisherman. He's never eaten a fish in his life, so far as he can remember. [*Sits herself at foot of steps R.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON. Dear me, how well you look, Miss Scarth.

FELICITY. I feel it. It's a grand life.

MRS. BRETHERTON. Now, tell me. When——

MAISIE [*interrupting*]. Mother, I want to bathe before the sun goes down.

MRS. BRETHERTON [*resignedly*]. Ah, yes. Well, come along. We may see you when we come back. I do so want to have a chat with you.

MAISIE [*coldly*]. Good afternoon, Miss Scarth. [*Exit by path over rock L*].

MRS. BRETHERTON [*following her daughter off*]. Bless the girl. I suppose she would get drowned on purpose if I didn't go with her. [*Exit.*]

CARMICHAEL [*after a pause*]. Miss Scarth, you know, don't you, how frightfully curious we all are about you. I know it is very rude, but it is natural—and you're natural, so I—well, I thought I'd ask you.

FELICITY. You could have asked me before. You know my name. It is my real name. Haven't you ever guessed why I am here?

CARMICHAEL. Ah yes. We've guessed. And I think that was worse manners than asking you. You come from London, don't you?

FELICITY. Yes—and other cities. I expect you find life too good to understand my revolt.

CARMICHAEL. You didn't just get tired of dances and theatres and all that sort of thing, did you?

FELICITY. I got tired of not being able to enjoy them.

CARMICHAEL. How? I hope I'm not worrying you.

FELICITY. I wasn't trained for the life I led. That

was all. I flung myself into it and drained every pleasure it could provide with the natural result that I collapsed physically. Oh, not the ordinary sort of collapse—one that October on a yacht would have cured. It was something very different.

CARMICHAEL. You can't always be satisfied with a fisher girl's life. Later in life you must come back or go mad.

FELICITY [*slowly*]. Nevertheless, I don't think I shall go back.

CARMICHAEL [*timorously*]. Miss Scarth, have you heard our battalion is being moved?

FELICITY. No, indeed. I have not. I'm sorry. Where are you going?

CARMICHAEL. To Aden. Are you really sorry?

FELICITY. Really, I'm sorry, very sorry. And Maisie Bretherton will be broken-hearted.

CARMICHAEL. It's rather rough that you should mention her.

FELICITY. I beg your pardon, but I really couldn't help it. You are engaged to be married.

CARMICHAEL. Yes. But, somehow, I doubt if it will ever come to anything.

FELICITY. What a pity! I'm sure she's very much in love with you, and you seemed so suited to each other. You are an officer and she is the daughter of a distinguished Army man.

CARMICHAEL. It has dawned on me that Maisie is a child.

FELICITY. How can you say that? She's eighteen and I know she makes her mother subscribe to the *English Review*.

CARMICHAEL. Oh, she's pretty advanced, I daresay. And I used to think that—well, I've been thinking differently lately.

FELICITY. Tell me all about it.

CARMICHAEL [*delighted*]. May I? Oh, you're so splendid.

FELICITY. Nonsense. There is no woman of thirty-six who doesn't want to hear all about it.

CARMICHAEL. Well, Miss Scarth, as you get older, you know, you get fairly fed up with flappers.

FELICITY. M'yes. I think I can translate that.

CARMICHAEL. You can't quite see the man's side—but you must be glad if—well, if you care.

FELICITY [*puzzled*]. Now, like a dear boy, tell me all that over again.

CARMICHAEL. I'd hate myself for telling you if you laughed.

FELICITY. I won't laugh.

CARMICHAEL. I love you—and I want—— [*He breaks away excitedly and goes to the edge of the platform.*]

FELICITY [*after a moment's flushed reflection*]. Car! [*He comes to her eagerly and kneels on one knee by her where she sits. She puts her left arm round his neck and kisses him firmly.*]

CARMICHAEL. Oh, Felic—Felicity! Don't send me away. I'd devote my life all to you. You can't think what a slave I'd be. And I could make you happy. I could. I could. I love you so much, so—rightly. Don't send me away.

FELICITY. While you talk to me like that I am not eager to send you away. It is very wonderful that I

should have stirred you to this, because you are just the sort of clean, manly boy that the average woman of my age will sell her soul to conquer. But, Car, my dear boy, you are asking me to do you an injury.

CARMICHAEL. It's wicked of you to say that. It only means that you think I couldn't make you happy.

FELICITY. No, you could make me happy.

CARMICHAEL. Felicity!

FELICITY. You only know a very little of me, Car.

CARMICHAEL. I know that you are beautiful, and——

FELICITY. When you choose a wife, you should choose her in spite of her beauty.

CARMICHAEL. I know your nature. Besides, aren't one's feelings the best guide after all?

FELICITY. Oh yes. Don't take tips from any one else. That's ruined many a gambler. But what I want to make clear to you, Car, is that you know nothing of my—antecedents.

CARMICHAEL. I don't want to know. Will you give me any hope? I want to marry you.

FELICITY. I will be quite frank with you, Car. If other things were not as they are, I would marry you and be grateful to marry you.

CARMICHAEL. If other things were not as they are? I suppose I ought to ask you what you mean by that.

FELICITY. One very solid thing is that you are engaged to Maisie Bretherton. But there are reasons more important even than that. I cannot tell you them. I'd die sooner than let you know—because, well, because you are you.

CARMICHAEL. Felicity. . . . I'm not poor.

FELICITY. Oh, for shame!

CARMICHAEL. No. You shouldn't reproach me. I only told you that because I suspect that you have money.

FELICITY. Dear twentieth-century boy! What a difference those literary Socialists have made to youth and innocence. Youth and innocence do not know it, but—well, as Lord Salisbury said, we're all Shavians now.

CARMICHAEL. You're making game of me.

FELICITY. Oh, Car. I'm not, I'm not, I'm not. I don't love you because you have neither the knowledge nor the strength to win my reverence. You've only got charm, Car. But I'm proud that you love me, and I would love to marry you, and I should make you happy, glory in owning you. But that's not the right way of matrimony. And it doesn't matter what way it is, because I am compelled, with a great ache in my heart, to say no to you.

CARMICHAEL. What are these reasons that you won't explain to me? [*He speaks excitedly and passionately.*] It isn't fair. This means years of misery to me. It does. It does: I can't stand flappers. I'll only think of you—and perhaps learn to hate you for treating me as a child. Felicity— [JERRY LE MAITRE *appears at the top of the steps L.*]

JERRY LE MAITRE. Yacht coming into the bay. [*He points out to sea.*]

FELICITY [*after an awkward pause*]. A yacht! Rather unusual, Jerry, isn't it? [*She goes to the edge of the*

platform, followed a little sulkily by CARMICHAEL.] Do you know whose it is, Jerry?

JERRY. No. There used to be a gentleman who came here in a yacht years ago, but I've forgotten his name. It wasn't that yacht. She's a schooner. His was a cutter.

FELICITY. How graceful she is! And isn't it exciting, Car? Some one bringing a yacht into Petit Bot! Why hasn't she gone to St. Peter Port?

CARMICHAEL [*sulkily*]. I don't know.

FELICITY. Cheer up, Car. Listen. [*She leads him away from JERRY.*] Come and have a dinner at my cottage to-night.

CARMICHAEL [*forgetting his promise to MAISIE*]. You're a brick.

FELICITY. As brown as one, anyway. Now run away.

CARMICHAEL. Thank you, Felicity. I shall be down at eight o'clock.

FELICITY. That's right. Au revoir. [*He shakes her hand and makes his way off R. up the steps.*]

JERRY [*after a surly pause*]. You're going away.

FELICITY. Going away, Jerry? What makes you think that?

JERRY. You're tired of living here.

FELICITY. Jerry, how dull of you! Of course I'm not.

JERRY. He has been tempting you to go back.

FELICITY. Oh, yes, you are right there. He has been tempting me.

JERRY. You will go?

FELICITY. No. I will not go.

JERRY. You say it because you want to believe it. But you will go.

FELICITY. You're wrong, Jerry. I've fought my battle alone, unaided. My only stimulants were the kiss and jeer of the sea. I won. I don't surrender.

JERRY. You won, and that's why you are tempted to surrender.

FELICITY. How do you mean, Jerry? You know what I have gone through. You are the only living human being that I have confided in about my struggle since I came here. You know how often I wavered, how often I was down on those rocks at midnight, despair in my heart and madness in my brain.

JERRY. I know.

FELICITY. The sea—only the sea—helped me to face another day. Then came a phase of cynical content.

JERRY. I remember when you were like that, but you grew out of it.

FELICITY. Nature wooed me from it. I fell in love with the spirit of land and water. I found a bridegroom in work, work in an old garden, in sweet meadows, on the crests of the waves. I hoed and reaped, shot and fished. My nerves renewed their life, my vitality gained fresh impetus, and——

JERRY. And you became beautiful after peaceful nights. Now you are tempted.

FELICITY. Tempted!

JERRY. Yes. You told me that once you nearly killed yourself. You had an impulse. You couldn't resist it. Why? Because your body was in misery. Now your

body is in glory. The impulse comes again. You want to use your body.

FELICITY. Jerry, tell me what you mean.

JERRY. You know. Your health and strength remind you of the times you enjoyed before. They are for you again if you choose. You can again taste the sweetness of little sins.

FELICITY [*bending her head*]. I know. I know.

JERRY. Absolutely without fear of suffering you can drive your body through months and months of gaiety.

FELICITY. Yes, Jerry, I have felt that.

JERRY. I knew it. And you have said to yourself—
“If my body breaks down again, surely I can return again to Petit Bot, to the turf and the sand and the sea.”

FELICITY. I have whispered that to the sea. And, do you know, Jerry, the sea said “No.” It grumbled, flung mighty laughs, dripping with foam, at me as I whispered. I know, Jerry. I belong to the sea. The sea must assent.

JERRY. Come and look at it. [*She joins him and goes to the edge of the platform.*] Look! Look!

FELICITY. A great shield of bronze blue. Long braids of foam.

JERRY. Does it answer you?

FELICITY. It stares. It just stares—and makes me burn with shame. Oh Jerry, Jerry, I’m so afraid of it. When the tide rolls in it’s as if I were being called to account. When the tide rolls out I feel as if I were released for recreation.

JERRY. The sea is right. The sea is simple. Simplicity is the only creed.

FELICITY. Oh, look, Jerry, here comes a boat from the yacht.

JERRY. Yes. I wonder if that is the gentleman who used to come here years ago. It is rather like him in build.

[TOM DENNY comes tumbling down the steps over the rocks
R.]

TOM. It's Doctor Stratton's yacht! It's the Doctor come back again. By all the powers, I'd clean given him up for ever.

JERRY. Usen't he to come years ago?

TOM. Aye! It was a cutter he had then, but that's his flag on that schooner. B'David, it's a great day! [Shouting.] Doctor Stratton, ahoy!

DR. STRATTON [heard in the distance as the dinghy approaches the foot of the rock wall]. How are you, Tommy? [At the sound of his voice FELICITY timorously makes her way off L. up the path.]

TOM. A good many years older, Doctor. And what's brought you back again after all this time?

DR. STRATTON. Ah! Been very busy, Tommy. And how is Mrs. Denny?

TOM. She'll be just mad to see you, Doctor. And she ain't used up all your pills yet. It's just wonderful how they've lasted all these years. [To the sailor rowing the dinghy.] Throw me up the rope, sonny. [A rope is thrown up. TOM catches it, and stands at the edge of the platform holding the boat to the foot of the ladder.] Carefully, Doctor. The rungs 'ud be a bit greasy. [DR. STRATTON climbs the ladder and gains the platform. He wears a navy blue reefer suit and yachting cap.]

DR. STRATTON [*speaking as he climbs the ladder*]. Let go the rope, Tom. [*Speaking over his shoulder.*] Take the dinghy back. I'll signal for you when I want you. Well, Tommy, my boy, shake. It's good to see your ugly old mug again. And is this Jerry? Bless me, how he's shot up! And now, how's my patient?

TOM. And who would you be meanin' by that?

DR. STRATTON. Why, Miss Scarth, of course. I sent her to you. Didn't she tell you?

TOM. That she didn't, Doctor. She was here a moment ago.

JERRY. She has just gone away up the path to the Point.

TOM. Well, run and fetch her, you jackanapes. [JERRY is going, but the DOCTOR stops him.]

DR. STRATTON. No, don't trouble, Jerry. I will see her presently. Well, hang me, Tom, if you're looking any thinner. [*He goes down L. and examines the boat.*] Tom, you old rascal, you've been quarrelling with Mrs. Denny again.

TOM. Well, Doctor, she did give me the tip of her tongue this morning, but it's the first time I've had the paint out for quite a while.

DR. STRATTON. And Jerry? Is he as fond of books as ever? Or is he working hard and saving up his money to get married?

JERRY. Must one have money to get married, sir?

DR. STRATTON. There's a current superstition to that effect, Jerry.

JERRY. It's the conventional idea, of course. But I'm sure Nature doesn't approve of being defied in

that way. [*He makes his way slowly to R. up the steps and off.*]

DR. STRATTON. Well, I'm—damned!

TOM [*tapping his forehead*]. I've told you before, Doctor, that the boy's potty. He reads these things in books, and the young simpleton thinks they're true. I'll be off now to tell Mrs. Denny you're here. You'll be looking round to see us now, won't you, Doctor? The old woman's that anxious to tell you about those pills. [TOM *ascends the steps R.*]

DR. STRATTON. I shall call round, Tom. [FELICITY *appears at the top of the path L. TOM notes her arrival and goes off R.*] Well?

FELICITY [*still on the path*]. Well?

DR. STRATTON. Your portrait would make a very good advertisement for the Small Holdings Act. [*She comes slowly down to him. He takes her proffered hand in his.*] I congratulate you.

FELICITY. I'm very grateful to you.

DR. STRATTON. Nonsense. I'm very proud of you. You took my advice very seriously.

FELICITY. Yes. And I'm feeling very human again.

DR. STRATTON. It was hard at first.

FELICITY. Agonising. But I got through. . . . Oh, how good—how wonderfully good it is to see you.

DR. STRATTON. For shame! I was going to say that to you. Bright eyes, brown skin—what a difference? By Jove, I am proud of you.

FELICITY. You have made me your possession.

DR. STRATTON. I know. Would you like me to box your ears?

FELICITY [*smiling*]. You could—and you would—if you liked.

DR. STRATTON. But I don't like. I want to look at you—and hold your hand. That's schoolboy talk. But it's a good sign. You are—you really are good to look at.

FELICITY. And do you know, Dr. Stratton, I know it. Now chaff me.

DR. STRATTON. I won't. You can be as self-satisfied as you like. It's all credit and glory for me.

FELICITY. Doctor. . . . Listen. . . . [*He still has her hand, and she draws him to her and almost whispers.*] I don't wear corsets now.

DR. STRATTON [*laughingly*]. I don't believe you. [*With an easy, unaffected grace she draws his arm round her. It is hardly coquettish. The woman is above that. But she does so glory in her physical splendour.*] H'm, quite right. [*A little reserve. He draws away very slightly.*] Tell me what you have been doing.

FELICITY. Studying Felicity. Waiting on her, serving her, guiding her—in the way you told Felicity.

DR. STRATTON. And—what a success! I ought to be president of the British Medical Association.

FELICITY. Yes. Yes. Yes. A success! Not the world at my feet. But good earth, good sand, good grass. I could kiss every inch of this spot.

DR. STRATTON. How did you get on with the—er—boiled onions?

FELICITY. Dear old things! I've got so fond of the silver nut in the middle.

DR. STRATTON. It's so jolly and juicy, isn't it? And the roast tea of old England?

FELICITY [*wryly*]. It took a little time.

DR. STRATTON. And the coarse bread—the potatoes—the sea wrack?

FELICITY. Bless them all. I didn't know life could be so simple and so enjoyable.

DR. STRATTON. Life is simplicity.

FELICITY. I know that now. Oh, if we could only teach the world that.

DR. STRATTON. The world will learn it. Not in our time. But I can see a time when the pursuit of wealth will slacken, when fresh water and clean growths will again be the real spoils of existence. You won't get that taught in a book or a play—especially a play. Every one conspires to teach that the play has no business with education. But in spite of that the triumph of simplicity will come. The great grandsons and perhaps the grandsons of the men who at the present moment burn daily candles before Aristotle will, as sure as you and I face each other on this platform, spread their limbs, their mouths, their nostrils in supplicating adoration to Nature and simplicity.

FELICITY. They would if they knew what I know.

DR. STRATTON. In the meantime you have asked me nothing.

FELICITY. It is at the tip of my tongue. I am afraid.

DR. STRATTON. Do you feel as deeply as ever?

FELICITY. Yes, but a little differently.

DR. STRATTON. How?

FELICITY. I feel that life is endurable, no matter what

you have to tell me. Physically I am so restored that I believe I could bear a great mental agony.

DR. STRATTON. I hoped for that. God grant there is no need.

FELICITY. You have found my child?

DR. STRATTON. I found your child two days after you placed the information in my hands.

FELICITY [*hardly whispering in her excitement*]. Found. . . . In two days. . . . Found! Before I came here? Oh! why——

DR. STRATTON [*interrupting her*]. Now, my dear Miss Scarth, you remember that you were in no fit condition——

FELICITY. Oh, yes, yes. Of course, you were right. But a whole eighteen months! So long!

DR. STRATTON. You have known your child for the best part of that time.

FELICITY. Known! How do you mean?

DR. STRATTON. I discovered that your child was in Guernsey, in this corner of Guernsey. I happened to know this part and old Tom's cottage. I sent you here, deliberately, advisedly. You should know your child without knowing the relationship. It is for you now to say—with complete knowledge of your feelings towards your child—whether you will reveal the relationship.

FELICITY [*brokenly*]. Who—who is it?

DR. STRATTON. Haven't you guessed?

FELICITY. Who is it?

DR. STRATTON. Maisie Bretherton.

FELICITY. Maisie Bretherton!

[MAISIE BRETHERTON appears at the top of the path over the rocks L. She is swinging her wet bathing costume wrapped up in a towel. She descends the path and crosses the platform. DR. STRATTON draws back and goes to the edge of the cliff. FELICITY gazes yearningly and curiously into the girl's face as she passes. MAISIE notices and draws away from her, a little irritated.]

FELICITY [as soon as MAISIE has passed her]. Miss Bretherton—er—let me introduce my friend, Dr. Stratton.

MAISIE [as DOCTOR STRATTON bows]. How do you do? [She is very cold and reserved in manner and goes off, *via* the steps R. without another look at FELICITY. As soon as she is off, MRS. BRETHERTON, puffing and blowing, appears at the head of the path on the rocks L.]

MRS. BRETHERTON [as she descends the path and crosses the stage]. Of all the inconsiderate girls I ever came across Maisie is the worst. Isn't it too bad of her, Miss Scarth, making me hurry on this hot day?

FELICITY [nervously]. Yes. Really. Too bad. May I introduce my friend, Dr. Stratton—Mrs. Bretherton.

MRS. BRETHERTON. Oh, how do you do? I fancy I've heard of your coming here before. But I never—— [The voice of MAISIE is heard off R. calling "Moth-er!" The last syllable is raised and prolonged.] Oh, bother the girl, I can't stop now. I hope you will call on us, Doctor. I should love to talk to you. Come whenever you like. I'm hardly ever out. Good-bye. [She has ascended the steps and disappears over the rock. DR. STRATTON has gone back to the edge of the cliff and takes

out a cigarette. Again comes MAISIE'S voice from the distance.]

MAISIE [*prolonging the syllables and elevating the last one*]. *Moth-er! Moth-er!* [*The call pierces FELICITY'S heart. A little cry of yearning anguish escapes her. She crushes her ears with her hands. DR. STRATTON has struck a match. He does not light his cigarette but lets the match burn while he closely watches FELICITY.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT III

A COTTAGE IN GUERNSEY

[*The room is papered in green and the ceiling is white-washed crudely. The back wall is pierced by a long, narrow window, on the sill of which are pots of flowers. In the centre of the right wall is a fireplace. The door is L. In the centre is a small square table with chairs above and to the R. and L. of it. Up R. against the wall is an antediluvian chiffonier, on which is a large lighted lamp. Up L. against the wall is a low seat of the kind commonly known as "rout." Light overcoats and caps belonging to CARMICHAEL WHITHAIR and DR. STRATTON are on this seat. Down L. against the wall is a small horsehair couch. Below the fireplace R. is a large rocking-chair. Down L. C. is an easy chair, its back turned to the audience. The room is decorated with pictures, dried grasses, a few flowers, and such seafaring trophies as the full-rigged model of a schooner and a couple of crossed assegais. On the mantelpiece are vases and a stopped china clock. The pictures are of a crude order mostly of marine taste, but the pièce de résistance is a large coloured chromograph representing a red-coated soldier, embracing a girl on a first-floor balcony, pre-*

paratory to leaping off to take his place in the ranks of the regiment marching through the street below. The table is covered with a white tablecloth, and has the dishes and implements appropriate to a dessert service for three upon it. The table equipment is of a humble order. FELICITY SCARTH sits above the table, DR. STRATTON to the right, and CARMICHAEL WHITHAIR to the left of her. FELICITY wears a rich evening gown of a tint of old bronze. It has an odd sheen something like that of a running snake. It is eighteen months out of date in design, and, therefore, quite beautiful. There are precious stones in her hair and round her fine brown neck is a string of emeralds. DR. STRATTON and CARMICHAEL WHITHAIR are in evening dress (dinner jackets). The former is cracking nuts and chewing them with gusto. FELICITY has a healthy-looking apple on her plate, which she cuts and bites with enjoyment. CARMICHAEL is not eating. The rise of the curtain finds him leaning over the table gazing adoringly up at FELICITY.]

FELICITY. I shall tell you to go, Car, if you persist in talking about me.

DR. STRATTON. Don't scold him. It's your fault for bringing an evening frock into the dessert.

FELICITY. I expect it is very old-fashioned. What are this year's sleeves like?

DR. STRATTON. As far as I can remember they are extravagantly like—sleeves.

FELICITY. Oh, I'm not really curious, although there are times when I'd give anything to have my hair done properly. Will you take some more claret, Car?

CARMICHAEL. No, thank you.

FELICITY. You, Doctor?

DR. STRATTON. No, I think not. "The stag at eve had drunk his fill."

FELICITY. M'm?

DR. STRATTON. Quotation. "The Lady of the Lake." Scott's finest emulsion. [*He cracks a nut in his teeth.*]

CARMICHAEL. When I see you as you are to-night, it is impossible to believe that you will stay here for ever.

FELICITY. Don't I seem happy?

CARMICHAEL. Yes, you seem so. But how you must want music and—dancing and——

FELICITY. I do sometimes want music.

DR. STRATTON [*sarcastically*]. And think of all the Turkey Trots you're missing!

FELICITY. The—Turkey—Trots?

DR. STRATTON. Ah! Came after your time, didn't it? It's the new dance. Irresistibly indecent, you know. The music halls set Society fashions nowadays.

CARMICHAEL. You want artificial light sometimes and artificial scents. The purity of this room must often torture you. You want the excitement of being with other people of your own station—in crowds. You want—— [*He hesitates.*]

DR. STRATTON. Go on. She wants the applause of women and the homage of men.

CARMICHAEL. Yes. I hardly liked to say it.

FELICITY. You are right. I want all that, but I remember. And want to forget. Why do you persist

DR. STRATTON. He thinks that there is no longer any reason for your burying yourself.

FELICITY. I know. Because I have a long spoon, he wants me to eat with the devil.

CARMICHAEL. Oh, hang it all!

DR. STRATTON. Why must one have a long spoon to eat with the devil?

FELICITY. So that one can reach to the bottom of the pot.

DR. STRATTON. One should learn to be content with the scraps that float.

FELICITY. No one has ever succeeded. In for a penny, in for a pound.

DR. STRATTON. And out when the market's inflated, eh? [*He cracks another nut.*] I think that one should lead the life that one most adorns.

CARMICHAEL. Surely you are not afraid of failure.

FELICITY. No, no. A thousand times, no. I fear nothing, nothing but—— [*She pauses for a moment, rises, goes to the window and looks out. Then she shuts the window.*] There, you've talked sufficiently of me. Let me hear about you—and others.

DR. STRATTON. I decline to talk scandal—except at a fashionable bedside. [*FELICITY goes to door L. and opens it.*]

FELICITY [*at door*]. Let us have three cups of *café noir*, Mrs. Denny, if you please. [*She closes the door.*]

DR. STRATTON [*producing cigarette-case*]. May we—and will you?

FELICITY. Do, by all means. I have given it up for ever.

DR. STRATTON. Good news. [*He and CARMICHAEL light cigarettes.*]

FELICITY [*coming down and seating herself in chair down L.C. facing CARMICHAEL, with her back half turned to the audience so that the left side of her face is seen in profile*]. How long have you known Maisie Bretherton, Car?

CARMICHAEL [*a little irritably*]. About a year.

FELICITY. Miss Bretherton is Mr. Whithair's fiancée, Doctor.

DR. STRATTON [*who has been told of it before*]. Yes, yes.

FELICITY. She is a very charming girl, very pretty. I'm very interested in her, Car. I wonder if you will mind my asking some questions about her.

CARMICHAEL [*rather resentfully*]. Not at all. It is very good of you to be interested.

FELICITY. She has lived in England, hasn't she?

CARMICHAEL. Her home is here, but she has spent a good many years in colleges in England.

FELICITY. I thought that was the case. Colonel Bretherton is dead, isn't he?

CARMICHAEL. Yes. [*He is a little puzzled by the examination.*]

FELICITY. She is her—mother's inseparable companion, isn't she?

CARMICHAEL. Yes. They're always together.

FELICITY. She will miss her very much—when you marry.

CARMICHAEL [*sulkily*]. I suppose she would.

FELICITY. Mrs. Bretherton has no other children?

CARMICHAEL. No.

FELICITY. You never knew Colonel Bretherton ?

CARMICHAEL. No.

FELICITY. You used to come years ago, Doctor. Did you meet him ?

DR. STRATTON. No. As a matter of fact, I didn't know there were people of that name in Guernsey till I made en—*[he coughs]*—till I was introduced this morning.

[TOM, *no longer barefooted, enters L. carrying a black tin tray with three coffee cups on it. He leaves the door open behind him.*]

TOM [*stopping on his way to the table and shouting over his shoulder*]. Jerry, ye lazy little devil, come and clear the things. [*To the company in general.*] He won't go to choir practice, so I give him your boots to clean, Miss Scarth. And a nice messy job he's making of 'em. He's bunged up every one of the lace holes with blacking, not that you mind, but it's the devilment of the boy that I can't understand. [*He is handing round the coffee cups.*] And it's a new Tantum Ergo they're practising at the church to-night, as Father Delamarter gave out specially after the banns of marriage.

[*Enter JERRY, no longer barefooted, fingers a little smudgy. He has no tray, but piles up the plates and dishes in a heap, TOM mildly assisting him.*]

DR. STRATTON. Do you go to Church, Miss Scarth ?

FELICITY. Yes. Indeed I do. It's the queerest little box I ever saw. And the service is conducted in the island *patois*, quite terrible if you are accustomed to roll your r's.

DR. STRATTON. And does the minister call on you ?

And do you preach to the mothers and drill godliness into the children?

FELICITY. A little of all that.

DR. STRATTON. You'll become a crank. [JERRY *laughs sympathetically*, TOM *regarding him with profound disgust and disfavour*.]

FELICITY. I don't do anything that doesn't amuse me.

DR. STRATTON [*dropping a tabloid from a tin box into his coffee*]. Well, it's the true philosophy of existence.

[TOM and JERRY *retire L. carrying the dishes*.]

FELICITY [*immediately reverting to the topic interrupted by the entrance of TOM*]. Have you ever spoken of an early marriage to Maisie Bretherton's mother, Car?

CARMICHAEL. No. I only spoke of our marriage the one time. She—— [*He hesitates*].

FELICITY [*eagerly*]. Yes?

CARMICHAEL. She seemed pleased, but I gathered that she wanted me to be older.

FELICITY. Ah yes. It's hard, but it's wise, Car. Did she say why, particularise why?

CARMICHAEL. No. She thought I ought to know more of the world and women, I think.

FELICITY. Yes.

DR. STRATTON. You'll never know any more of 'em, my boy. I know just as much now as I did at your age.

[*Enter TOM L.*]

TOM. Mrs. Bretherton and her daughter are wantin' to see you, ma'am.

FELICITY [*excitedly*]. Indeed, Tom. Show them in—
at once. [*Exit TOM L.*]

[FELICITY *exchanges a glance with* DR. STRATTON. CARMICHAEL *rises and goes up to the L. end of the window.* FELICITY *rises and places her coffee cup on the table.*]

[*Enter* MAISIE BRETHERTON. *She has changed from the frock she wore in the preceding act, but does not wear evening dress. Round her shoulders is a cloak of crimson material. Her face is white and stern.*]

FELICITY [*meeting her*]. Miss Bretherton— [*Extending her hands.*] I am so pleased— [MAISIE *draws back without a word, standing just below and inside the door and acknowledging no one.*]

DR. STRATTON [*in reference to her cloak*]. Has Red Riding Hood come to see her— [He *pulls up, a little annoyed with himself.*]

[*Enter* MRS. BRETHERTON, *who has changed into a dress of joyless black, looking very worried and upset.*]

FELICITY. It is very charming of you to call. We— we have just finished dinner. Do sit down, won't you?

[MAISIE *sits in the chair down L.C. from which* FELICITY *has just risen.* MRS. BRETHERTON *walks nervously across the room and seats herself on the edge of the rocking chair down R.*]

DR. STRATTON [*to* MRS. BRETHERTON, *after a pause*]. Are you a near neighbour of Miss Scarth's, or did you have to walk far?

[CARMICHAEL *seats himself on "roust" seat up L. against wall.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON [*stonily*]. We are not—near neighbours.

CARMICHAEL [*weakly*]. I was going to call on you on my way home.

[*FELICITY has sat in chair above table C.*]

MAISIE [*through her teeth*]. Thank you. You are very charitable. You volunteered to patronise us at dinner this evening.

CARMICHAEL [*plainly distressed*]. Good heavens, yes. I forgot. Oh, I do beg your pardon. . . . You must have been surprised to see me here.

MAISIE [*meaningly*]. I was pleasantly surprised to see Dr. Stratton here.

DR. STRATTON. Eh?

MRS. BRETHERTON [*emotionally*]. Oh, I'm so glad that you are here.

DR. STRATTON. This is very flattering popularity. What have I done to—

MRS. BRETHERTON. You see, Maisie thought that Car was alone with Miss Scarth.

FELICITY [*understanding at last*]. Ah—h!

DR. STRATTON. Ho, ho! Bless my soul! And why not? No, I withdraw that. I won't say anything.

MAISIE. But I haven't the slightest doubt that it is a very exceptional occasion that finds them so admirably divided.

FELICITY. Oh, my dear, my dear. . . . It hurts me terribly that you should have thought any wrong.

MAISIE. Thought! [*She springs to her feet and almost flings herself at the table above which FELICITY sits.*] How dare you address me like that! And how dare you take

Car away from me? We're engaged, and I love him, and you come and lure him away. Who are you? Who are you, to come here and spoil our happiness? You can't, you daren't deny it. Once we were so happy, always together, good chums as well as lovers. And then you began to fascinate him. He started to lie to me as to where he had been. And he had been with you. I didn't know at first, but I soon found out. What devil's work have you come here to do? What——

DR. STRATTON [*rising*]. Miss Bretherton, this matter can be discussed much more calmly.

MAISIE. Who are you to interrupt? Is she anything to you? Can you say who she is? Who gave her those clothes? Why is she leading a fisher-girl's life? Why is she here to bring misery on me? I'll find out. I'll find out who you are. You're hiding. You've sneaked here to escape some one or something. I'll expose you. Felicity Scarth, indeed! Where did you get that name? I don't know what your life was before you came here, but it was a bad one. I'll swear that. It was in your face when you came first. You'll not carry in on here, not at my expense. You're twice as old as I am, but you'll find I can fight. Who are you? Who are you, that you should rob me? [*The girl is hysterical with passion.*] I can't stand it. I won't stand it. If you don't leave Car alone, I'll kill you. [*She is trembling, frantic and tearless. The frenzy of her tones alarms* MRS. BRETHERTON, *who rises from her chair and hastens to MAISIE's side.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON. Maisie, Maisie, my darling, control yourself. [*She puts her arms round her and leads her*

back to her chair down L.C. MAISIE half resists, but suffers herself to be gently forced on the seat. MRS. BRETHERTON stands by her for a moment and then sits on the couch against the wall L.]

DR. STRATTON [*rising*]. I suggest that Mr. Whithair and I leave.

CARMICHAEL [*rising from the "roust" seat and coming down a few steps*]. Not for one moment. This has to be settled now. It's gone too far for any further consideration. I'm the guilty party, I know. It was wrong of you, Maisie, to blame Felic—Miss Scarth. There has been no luring away. I—I fell in love with Felicity. I was engaged to you, and I suppose I'm a blackguard. But I couldn't help it. It's the old excuse, but it's dead true this time. I meant to ask you to release me, although don't imagine that Felicity cares for me. I'm no better off than you, Maisie. But I love her and I shall always love her, though she perhaps will always laugh at me. But knowing her has taught me some wonderful things. You needn't grieve over me, Maisie. I haven't started manhood yet—and this engagement was bound to break any way. I'm sorry, and I beg your pardon with all my heart. But this must be the end. I have learnt to love—and for the first time. [*He snatches up his overcoat and cap and makes an impulsive exit L.*]

DR. STRATTON [*half under his breath*]. Young ass! [*He goes to the window, pushes it open and calls*] Whithair! Just wait for me a moment. I have something to say to you. [*He gets a surly assent from outside.* DR. STRATTON *puts on coat and cap.*]

FELICITY [*rising and going to him anxiously*]. You won't tell——

DR. STRATTON. Once again I emerge from retirement. Another patient. Very bad. Cerebral. Don't interfere with my methods. I shall come back. [*Exit DR. STRATTON L.*]

[*MAISIE has been crying since the end of CARMICHAEL'S speech.*

Now her sobbing becomes louder and more passionate.]

MRS. BRETHERTON [*going to MAISIE and putting her arms round her*]. Maisie, Maisie, don't give way, my darling. You're only your mother's little baby still, you know. It was only a little girl's love affair. Don't cry so cruelly, dear. You're not a woman yet. You mustn't take a woman's hurt. Come, darling, wipe your eyes and come home again. [*MAISIE still sobs bitterly. FELICITY has risen from her seat. She watches MRS. BRETHERTON'S efforts to comfort MAISIE with jealous interest. Now she comes down to the chair and almost imperiously removes MRS. BRETHERTON'S arms from round the trembling girl, much to MRS. BRETHERTON'S astonishment. FELICITY sinks before the chair and puts her arms round MAISIE. For a few moments she does not speak, just holding the girl, the pain and the supreme joy of the occasion being evident in her face. MRS. BRETHERTON stands to the L. of the chair, utterly bewildered by FELICITY'S attitude.*]

FELICITY. Maisie dear, for pity's sake don't sob like that. You are stabbing my heart. Listen, dear. You have no idea of the truth. Your boy is everything to me, yes, but only because he—Oh, my dear, I can't explain. But you shall have your boy. If you want him, you shall have him. I'll see to that. Only don't

cry, dear, and say—say something kind to me. Say—say you don't hate me.

MAISIE [*pushing out her hands*]. Take her away. What is she doing to me? I hate her, I hate her, I hate her!

FELICITY [*passionately, her arms round MAISIE again*]. You shan't hate me, you shan't hate me. God help me. You shall love me. Oh—[*wearily*] you mustn't, mustn't hate.

MAISIE [*almost screaming in hysteria*]. Take her away. She's stifling me. Take her away! Mother! Mother! Take her away.

MRS. BRETHERTON. Miss Scarth, please leave her alone. I'm sure you mean well, but you are making her worse. Leave her to me.

FELICITY [*retaining her hold on MAISIE*]. Leave her to me. She shall not misunderstand. I won't let her go till she realises that I have done her no wrong.

MRS. BRETHERTON. You shall let her go. You must be crazy. See how the child resents it.

FELICITY. I see. I see. And, God! How I feel it too.

MRS. BRETHERTON. Come away. Only her mother can soothe her now. You shall see her later.

FELICITY [*reluctantly rising and moving slightly away from the chair*]. Only her mother! [*There is a certain bitterly satirical note in FELICITY'S voice that makes MRS. BRETHERTON look at her very sharply.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON [*challenging*]. Yes. Only her mother. [*FELICITY turns and looks straight into MRS. BRETHERTON'S eyes. MRS. BRETHERTON is on the L. of the*

chair by MAISIE'S side, FELICITY a few paces to the right of the chair and slightly below it.]

MRS. BRETHERTON. Why do you look like that? [*For answer FELICITY goes back to the chair and puts her arms round MAISIE again with an air of possession. She again looks meaningly into MRS. BRETHERTON'S face.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON [*after a fearful, understanding pause, in which she carefully scrutinises FELICITY'S face*]. You have come, then?

FELICITY. Yes. God help me, I have come. [*She leaves MAISIE and goes and sits in chair R. of table. MAISIE is still very agitated and has not followed this conversation. MRS. BRETHERTON stands a little dazed for a moment. Then she rouses MAISIE.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON. Maisie! Maisie, come dear. [*She raises her and leads her still crying to the door*]. Wait for me in the road a few moments. [*Exit MAISIE L.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON [*coming a little unsteadily to FELICITY, and placing her hands on FELICITY'S bowed shoulders*]. You poor woman! [*She sits in the chair above table C. just by FELICITY.*] How she must have hurt you. Poor woman! But the little girl is so sweet and tender, really. I love her so much.

FELICITY. Oh, why was she taken from me? Why was she taken from me?

MRS. BRETHERTON. There are some questions, dear, that can only be answered from hell. They tore her away, did they? They hid her. Yes, yes, I can guess. Curse them! That's all that is left for us to do. Curse them.

FELICITY. How did she come to you?

MRS. BRETHERTON [*speaking very quietly with her eyes half*

shut]. We adopted her, dear. My husband and I had been married a very long time. We had no children. It was what the world calls a disappointment. A disappointment! A man doesn't seem to suffer what we suffer in that case. Occasionally jealous pangs when he sees the children of his friends, that is all. With us there is always the dull ache. Isn't it an awful ache, dear? I suffered from it for years—long, long years. I had no other interests to distract me. Then, do you know—[*there is a gleam of unnatural laughter in her voice*—I became just a little odd. I know it. It amused my friends, but I couldn't help myself. I became quite odd and I remember so well my husband's frowns. He was very puzzled, although, God knows, he should not have been. Do you know what I would do, dear? You mustn't—you won't smile. I had some big dolls and I used to dress them and put them to bed as if they were children. And they had their special chairs in the drawing-room, one for Marguerite, one for Gladys, another for Dorothy Dimple, and so on. And when callers came I didn't move the dolls. Their chairs were their own and they must not be disturbed. That was how I was odd. I knew it, of course. But, whenever I thought of it, the idea always seemed to slip away very quickly. And people said I was odd. And somehow I was content that they should think so. That meant that my mind was already unbalanced and that I was near to madness. Then Maisie came. God sent her to me to save me. He must have thought I had suffered enough. We were spending a holiday in Cornwall, and one day we were out walking and we called at

a farmhouse to buy some fruit. At the door of the farmhouse some children were playing—a game they called “Mothers and Fathers.” The baby was a mite of three, very dark and with delicious flashing eyes and bright red mouth. It was Maisie. I petted her, and the farmer’s wife told me she was not her child, that she was illegitimate and that they had been paid to rear her. The next day my husband secured Maisie for me. Yes—he bought her. How dreadful it is to tell that to her mother.

FELICITY. God be thanked she fell into your gentle hands.

MRS. BRETHERTON. Ah, I was so grateful for her. I loved her so much that it was sometimes painful to reflect that she was not mine. But oh, my dear, she did soothe the ache of my life. It has only hurt me very rarely since.

FELICITY. I nearly killed myself, but Dr. Stratton saved me. I have worked so hard here and so naturally and tired myself so that my brain has had little chance to torture me. Now——

MRS. BRETHERTON. Yes. Now!

FELICITY. Now—it will be worse. He was quite right. He warned me about this.

MRS. BRETHERTON. She may come to you yet.

FELICITY. She may. But what of you?

MRS. BRETHERTON. I should only suffer as if I had lost her on her marriage. Ten years ago I could not have parted with her. I would have fought you for her—fought like a tigress. But it is more tolerable now that she is nearly a woman. And we should not be widely separated, should we?

FELICITY. She is legally yours, is she not, even if she wished to come to me.

MRS. BRETHERTON. Yes. I'm not proud of that. We women have no reason to parade the law. It's an evil thing that I should be entitled to keep your child.

FELICITY. Think of the poor women who lose their children in the Divorce Court. One false step and they lose the very essence of their existence.

MRS. BRETHERTON. Yes. They had a Divorce Commission in London recently. The experts were much too expert to tackle that vile scandal. No woman ever deserved the torture of separation from her issue. It is lucky for the poor creatures that they can seek forgetfulness in debauchery or lunacy. Oh, the everlasting mercy of a Providence who permits insanity. It does alleviate the torture of women, thank God!

FELICITY. How achingly bitter you are?

MRS. BRETHERTON. I have never shown it before. I think I've always had it in my head that I must speak and behave as the people of my age and appearance do in books. I've been afraid of my real thoughts. You have made me speak out. I wonder why? Just because you are a woman who has suffered as I have suffered! Perhaps it is because you are Maisie's mother.

FELICITY. It is because you know I understand. Oh, I do so want you to love me. [*There is the terrible yearning of the unloved in her voice. She has risen.* MRS. BRETHERTON rises, and the two women kiss, almost a passionate kiss of understanding and sympathy. FELICITY now goes up to the window. The door is heard opening.

MRS. BRETHERTON goes down L. and seats herself on the couch. She buries her face in her hands.]

[Enter CARMICHAEL WHITHAIR L., wearing overcoat. He comes in hesitatingly. FELICITY takes a step towards him, her eyes desperately questioning. He draws away from her a little reluctantly, but with the aversion of a boy meeting something he does not understand. He crosses the room and sits in the chair immediately R. of the table. FELICITY'S eyes follow him, her face eloquent of the cruel blow to her feelings. DR. STRATTON now enters, also wearing a light overcoat.]

FELICITY [to DR. STRATTON under her breath]. You have told him ?

DR. STRATTON. Yes. And you ? [He looks round at MRS. BRETHERTON, and notes her attitude.] H'm. It's just as well. We all know ?

FELICITY. All but Maisie.

DR. STRATTON. All but Maisie, eh, she being the person least concerned, I suppose. [FELICITY does not answer, but sits in the chair above table C., and putting her arms on the table rests her head on them. DR. STRATTON throws his cap on the "rout" seat up L., and sits in the chair L. of table C. There is a heavy pause. Suddenly the voice of TOM DENNY is heard outside the door.]

TOM [off]. What did you call me, you idle, loafing good-for-nothing ?

JERRY [off]. I said nothing. You don't seem to think it right that I should look at you.

TOM [off]. Nor is it. And it's not for the likes of you to answer back. You've had a good home here ever since you were a baby. But I'll put you out. D'ye hear ?

I'll put you out, you lyin', thievin' God-cursed bastard!
[*He pronounces this last word with furious emphasis. The word rings through the room and produces a different effect on each person. MRS. BRETHERTON moans slightly. FELICITY sits bolt upright, staring straight before her. CARMICHAEL drops his head in his hands on the table. DR. STRATTON, after a moment's indecision, rises and goes to the door.*]

DR. STRATTON [*opening door*]. Tom!

TOM [*off*]. Yes, sir.

DR. STRATTON. Shut up!

TOM [*off*]. I beg your pardon, sir. [DR. STRATTON *shuts the door, returns to the table and sits again in chair L. of it.*]

MAISIE [*from off, speaking through the window*]. Are you never coming, mother?

MRS. BRETHERTON. I am coming, dear. [MRS. BRETHERTON *rises wearily and goes towards the door.*]

DR. STRATTON [*rising and intercepting MRS. BRETHERTON*]. One moment, please. [*Looking to both MRS. BRETHERTON and FELICITY.*] How long is that child to remain in ignorance?

MRS. BRETHERTON [*miserably*]. Oh! I don't know. I don't know?

DR. STRATTON. She must know before she marries. That won't be long if I'm any judge of masculine taste.

MRS. BRETHERTON. Not yet! Not yet! Surely not yet!

DR. STRATTON. The girl must know. She will be told bitterly and brutally later on. Let her know now that she may learn how to carry herself. She's old enough, and I think she's strong minded-enough.

MRS. BRETHERTON [*to FELICITY*]. Oh—what do you think, my dear?

FELICITY. I think she must be told now. God help you.

MRS. BRETHERTON. I can't . . . well, do as you wish.
[DR. STRATTON *goes out L.* MRS. BRETHERTON *seats herself at the upper end of the couch.* DR. STRATTON *re-appears followed by MAISIE, her face all inquiry and wonderment.* DR. STRATTON *leads her gently towards the chair down L.C. that she has just vacated. His left arm is round her. As they pass MRS. BRETHERTON the latter jumps up, her heart in her arms, and impetuously snatches MAISIE and kisses her again and again and again, a terrible moan in her throat.]*

MAISIE [*expostulating slightly*]. Mother! Mother! Mother! What is it, dear? [MRS. BRETHERTON *frees her and DR. STRATTON leads MAISIE to the chair down L.C. Then he fetches his chair from the left of the table and seats himself practically at the point of MAISIE's knee.*]

DR. STRATTON. Miss Bretherton, you are a little puzzled at all this mystery, aren't you? Well, it isn't fair that you should be puzzled. It isn't fair that you should be the only one of us who knows nothing of a matter which vitally concerns you.

MAISIE [*looking round in bewildered fashion*]. Yes?

DR. STRATTON. You don't know very much about life, little girl, do you?

MAISIE [*bridling slightly*]. I took lots of prizes at college.

DR. STRATTON. I'm sure you did. But I wonder if you ever came in contact with the sort of people whom you must occasionally have read about. You have read your Strindberg and your Sudermann, I'll be bound.

MAISIE. I think a girl ought to.

DR. STRATTON. Certainly. But I don't suppose it ever entered your pretty head that such things as you read of there do happen every day and such people are really quite common.

MAISIE. Oh, they only write of very extreme cases.

DR. STRATTON. Not at all. A dustbin is often typical landscape. You and I have been and are constantly on the fringe of maelstroms of human passion. . . . It is odd that you should have that cloak on this evening. You know the real story of Red Riding Hood?

MAISIE. There's only one, isn't there?

DR. STRATTON. No. Of course there is the story that is told to children. A wolf eats up a grandmamma, and as soon as the grandmamma is swallowed, Red Riding Hood calls. The wolf puts on grandmamma's cap and gets into her bed, so that not even a Sherlock Holmes, let alone a little girl, could tell him from a real grandmamma. When Red Riding Hood reaches the bedside the wolf jumps on her and eats her up.

MAISIE. Oh no. You're quite wrong. The wolf is just going to eat Red Riding Hood when a woodman rushes in and cuts the wolf in half with his axe, so that grandmamma gets out and everything is all right.

DR. STRATTON. Ah, yes. That's the happy ending. That was added for America. The real story of Red

Riding Hood is never told to children. But many of them find it out when they grow up. Red Riding Hood was really very nearly a woman. She was a girl of your age and, if you will forgive me, of your attractions. In fact, Maisie Bretherton, she was very, very like you. One day she met a man. He was very delightful outwardly. He was very kind, very gentle, and very generous—just as kind and as gentle and as generous almost as a grandmamma. In fact, to Red Riding Hood he was just as good as a fairy grandmamma. Then came a day when he changed. She went to see him, expecting to find the same courteous, protecting friend she had known before, and suddenly he became a wolf——

MAISIE [*echoing*]. Became a wolf——

DR. STRATTON. Yes. He became a wolf and destroyed her. She is still alive, of course, but he destroyed her.

MAISIE [*covering her face with her hands*]. I understand.

DR. STRATTON. Would you like to hear the after-history of Red Riding Hood?

MAISIE. Must I?

DR. STRATTON. I think you must. The wolf disappeared. He was never seen again. In all probability his identity, his real name, will never be known. Red Riding Hood was left with a little child—whose father was the wolf. . . . Do you realise, little girl, that there are many Red Riding Hoods in the world, and many men and women whose mothers were Red Riding Hoods?

MAISIE. Many! Many! Oh, why are you telling me this?

DR. STRATTON. You must guess, little girl, first. Guess in your mind. Don't hurry, now. Think. Why have I told you this? Why, why? Why, indeed?

[*There is an agonising pause. Suddenly CARMICHAEL WHITHAIR leaps to his feet.*]

CARMICHAEL. My God! I can't bear this. [*He rushes impulsively from the room.* DR. STRATTON, FELICITY, and MRS. BRETHERTON do not move a muscle.]

MAISIE [*knowing, but dreading to know*]. Tell me. You are only warning me.

DR. STRATTON. —More than that. [*Again a pause. The girl guesses, but is all reluctance, hoping against hope. FELICITY rises from her chair and comes snakily down to the side of DR. STRATTON. She leans forward, watching the girl's face.*]

MAISIE [*brokenly*]. I am the daughter of a Red Riding Hood.

DR. STRATTON [*gravely*]. That is so. [*The girl's head drops. DR. STRATTON rises and crosses R. FELICITY remains still watching MAISIE closely. MAISIE rises. Her crimson cloak slips from her shoulders and falls at FELICITY'S feet.*]

MAISIE [*throwing herself on the floor at MRS. BRETHERTON'S knees*]. Oh, mother, mother, mother! What does this mean?

MRS. BRETHERTON [*in a voice that is strange to herself*]. I am not your mother.

MAISIE [*looking up into MRS. BRETHERTON'S face in horrified astonishment*]. Mother! [*She takes MRS. BRETHERTON'S arm and shakes it as if to bring her to talk*]

reasonably.] Mother! [FELICITY picks up the cloak from the floor.]

MRS. BRETHERTON. I am not your mother. [MAISIE rises and draws away from MRS. BRETHERTON. Then she turns and faces FELICITY and DR. STRATTON. The expression on FELICITY'S face holds her attention. Then she notices that she has picked up the crimson cloak. She comes close to her and looks her in the face.]

MAISIE. You! . . . You! . . . You are my mother? [FELICITY, after a moment's pause, bows her head in assent.]

MAISIE [*excitedly*]. But—I don't know you. I don't like you. I don't—

DR. STRATTON [*interrupting, though MAISIE does not allow him to stop the flow of her speech.*] Your mother!

MAISIE. I don't want you. Why have you come? I don't like you. I can't go near you. I'd hate—

DR. STRATTON. Be careful. You may regret this.

MAISIE. I'd hate to know you. You've shamed me. I don't want you. I don't want you. [*Impetuously she rushes to the door.*] I can't bear it. [*She has gone, the door swinging to behind her. FELICITY, clutching the crimson cloak to her breast, sinks miserably to her knees. Her head is bowed.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

PETIT BOT BAY. [As in Act II.]

[*It is night. The moon is high and occasionally obscured by hastening clouds. It spreads blue and green lights over the landscape. Yellow lights twinkle from the Martello Tower on the far shore. The sound of the waves beating on the beach is decidedly louder than it was in the second Act. The wind moans, and there is a storm gathering. Up L., at the foot of the rocks, is a large lighted lantern, its face turned to the rock. When the curtain rises, TOM DENNY is discovered, down L., resignedly painting the boat. He is mumbling and growling to himself. After a moment or two JERRY LE MAITRE, again bare-footed, enters, coming down the steps R.*]

TOM [*when he recognises the approaching figure*]. It's you, you young devil, is it? Well, are you satisfied now you've got me into trouble again?

JERRY. It was your own fault. Mrs. Denny doesn't like strong language.

TOM. I'll agree that she don't. And, d'ye know, I've been told to apologise to you for—for calling you what I called you. . . . Well, I do. I'm very sorry you are one. And now that's over, you young ba—devil.

JERRY. I don't want your sympathy. I have no objection to doing without relations. It saves a lot of complications.

TOM. That's an evil thing to say, young man, but I'll not discuss it with you. You'd talk my head off pretty quick. But, damme, if I see why I shouldn't call you what you are, though the blood in you may be better than mine.

JERRY. It was the word you used that Mrs. Denny objected to.

TOM. Well, when I was a lad you'd see it often enough in the history book and the bits of Shakespeare.

JERRY. Perfectly true. But Shakespeare and the historians are privileged. It is very rude to call things by their right names nowadays.

TOM [*glaring at him*]. I believe you're getting at me again. [*Angrily.*] Are ye?

JERRY. No.

TOM. I don't know. I've got to be up at the water-works now. I'll think it over when I'm with the engines. And, mark you, if the thinkin' goes against you, you'll get your head lammed in the morning. So go to bed on that. [*Exit TOM, R., up the steps, carrying away his paint pot and brush.*]

[*JERRY shrugs his shoulders, and going to the extreme edge of the platform leans up against the rocks on the right. Then, pushing his knees out, he lets his body sink into a sitting posture.*]

JERRY [*muttering at first, his voice gradually becoming audible*]. What does it matter to them? What does it

matter to them? [*A great wave thunders on the shore.*] All that much? But how should you know? Spit away, you can't answer that question. You can't. Swear away, you great bully. There are some things beyond you. . . . I wonder if you know why life is popular? [*Again a wave thunders.*] I love that way of laughing. It ends an argument so quickly. . . . [*With sudden surprise.*] You're not laughing. . . . You're angry to-night. [*Another crash.*] Oh yes, you are angry. So energetically angry. [*The wind whistles and groans.*] Ho, ho, a great night. Roar away, you brute. You want tragedy to-night. You want spoils. You want to shake us up and drive us to mad deeds. You're drunk, you devil, you're drunk. Out there the foam pools rolling silkenly. Here [*a great wave crashes*] you are howling death. Death! Death! Death! [*Again a crash.*] Crash away, you god, you devil. I can be mad in your company. . . . [*An angrier crash. Spray falls on the speaker.*] Oh yes, I'm afraid. I know how hard you can strike. I know what you know. I know what you can do. But you are mad. Your floor is strewn with the corpses of the mad. You drove them mad before you swallowed them. You ugly, bullying coward! [*Again the thunder from the beach.*]

[*Down the steps cut in the rock R., trembling and stumbling, comes MAISIE BRETHERTON. At the foot of the steps she stops and looks affrightedly out to sea. She covers her ears as if to shut out the noise of the elements. Then she hurries across the platform and up the path over the rocks opposite. JERRY sees her*

cross, looks up curiously, and then jumps to his feet. He hastily climbs the steps R., and gets on the highest accessible point of the cliff. Shading his eyes with his hands, he looks in the direction in which MAISIE has gone. Suddenly an exclamation escapes him. He almost leaps from the rocks, rushes across the platform, and off by the path that MAISIE took. For a moment the scene is empty. The storm is gathering in strength. Now down the steps, R., descends DR. STRATTON. He wears his cap and coat buttoned up. He crosses the platform and picks up the lighted lantern. He waves it from side to side, signalling to his yacht at anchor in the bay. Presently he gets an answering signal from the yacht, and he puts the lantern down. JERRY re-enters down the path L. pulling MAISIE after him. He holds her tightly by the wrist. She is whimpering and mildly resisting him.]

JERRY. No, you don't, young lady. Not on a night like this. You'd have been washed off those rocks if you had gone much farther.

MAISIE. Let me alone. It's not your business.

JERRY. You must go home.

MAISIE. I won't. I'll never see my home again.

[The breakers roar.

DR. STRATTON (coming down). Jerry! What is all this about. Maisie Bretherton! Why are you here?

[MAISIE whimpers.

JERRY. I just pulled her off that sloping rock on the other side in time. [MAISIE breaks from JERRY, and, crossing the platform, seats herself at the foot of the steps,

burying her face in her hands.] She'd have been taken off in another minute. The water's coming up very high to-night.

MAISIE [*passionately*]. Why couldn't I do it? Why couldn't I do it? Just for pity you might have let me go.

DR. STRATTON. My dear girl, this is very, very wrong of you.

JERRY. What is it? Were you there on purpose? Did I save you when you didn't want to be saved?

MAISIE. Yes, yes, yes. You interfering fool! What right had you to touch me?

JERRY. What right? . . . You were going to throw yourself in the sea! [*His face lights up joyously.*] Ha, ha! [*He rushes to the edge of the platform.*] I've robbed you. [*The sea roars up at him.*] I've robbed you. I've beaten you for once, you greedy monster. Snarl away. I've beaten you. D'you hear? I've beaten you.

DR. STRATTON. Be quiet, you madman!

JERRY [*addressing the sea*]. What's your next move? I'm ready for you. [*He rushes up the rocks L.*] I'll beat you again. [*He is out of sight but his voice is heard in the distance.*] I'll beat you again.

DR. STRATTON [*to MAISIE*]. You were going to do a very cruel and selfish thing. You are not yet a woman, so that I can find it in my heart to forgive you. But the unthinking maiden makes a bad wife and a worse mother. You must readjust your outlook.

MAISIE. Can I ever look the world in the face again? My mother—is a shameful thing.

DR. STRATTON. How dare you?

MAISIE. I have to face a world that knows nothing of pity. I have to look people in the face if I live, and whether they know my secret or not I shall always have to drop my eyes, ashamed. Is that worth living for!

[The noise of the surge comes up.]

DR. STRATTON. Don't misunderstand me. I am exceedingly sorry for you, because, rightly or wrongly, the world frowns at the illegitimate child. But you look at it only from one point of view. Review your position. You are very, very pretty. That is very useful and not altogether usual. To whom do you owe that gift? Your mother? Is it not so?

MAISIE. Is that to her credit?

DR. STRATTON. Immensely. It's the first gift that every woman begs of her fairy godmother. Women who deny it are simply common or garden liars. But let us go further. You are very well clothed. You get all the pretty things you want, don't you? And you are fond of pretty clothes.

MAISIE. Yes. But how does that affect——

DR. STRATTON. You have been very well educated. You have been taught everything that would help you to enjoy the luxuries of life.

MAISIE. I suppose so.

DR. STRATTON. In addition to all those gifts, you are yourself very sweet-natured, very unselfish, very pure-minded and, when you like, very good company. Now those are all very desirable qualities.

MAISIE. But who——?

DR. STRATTON. I've just been having a chat with your foster-mother. Whence did you derive those qualities?

From your parents. You are a perfectly adorable little angel——

MAISIE. Dr. Stratton! [*A flash of lightning.*]

DR. STRATTON. I repeat. You are a perfectly adorable little angel because you have the good fortune to be the daughter of Felicity Scarth and a man who, however reckless he may have been, must have had good points. [*The bellow of thunder.*] Think of it, little girl. An angel, because Felicity is your mother, and a well-dressed and a well-educated angel because Mrs. Bretherton is your foster-mother. Aren't you grateful to them?

MAISIE. I don't say that Mrs. Bretherton——

DR. STRATTON. Maisie, you are grateful. You must be passionately grateful when you allow yourself to think. What might have been your fate? You know that you might have been born in wedlock, as most of us are, of perfectly respectable parents. It is possible, of course, that you would have been just as delightfully equipped as you are now. But there is a possibility of quite the reverse. Would you have been happy with a squint, Maisie? Would you have been happy with a County Council education? Would you have been happy if you had to go through life wearing black provincial corsets? In gratitude for what you are, Maisie, surely you can reconcile yourself to the loss of what you might have been. What would the average plain and poor girl, born in wedlock, say if you could offer to change places with her? The way you are born doesn't matter, little girl. It's the way you die that counts.

MAISIE. I have a lot to be grateful for, and——and it's very nice of you to call me an angel, and——I know

I've got nice clothes and can—can write short stories and poetry and so on, but—oh! to go through life eternally conscious that I am branded—[JERRY quietly re-enters by the path L.]—branded as illegitimate, knowing that I am the outcome of a few moments of loose passion, that the world regards me, pitying when it does not despise, as a love-child! That's the name they give us. I saw it in one of the magazines. How vile it sounds!

DR. STRATTON. Vile! It is very gentle, very tender.

JERRY. So that is the trouble, eh?

DR. STRATTON [*angrily*]. Jerry, go home.

JERRY. No. I've a right to speak to her. I saved her and she's as good as I am. [*He seats himself beside her at the foot of the steps.*] Do you know, Miss Bretherton, that I am in the same case, too.

MAISIE. I have heard it.

JERRY. It never occurred to me that it was shameful. I am, indeed, often grateful for it because it leaves me to follow my own line. What has he been saying to you?

DR. STRATTON. I've been reminding her, my lad, that she has none of the vices and disabilities of the average love-child.

JERRY. That's why she's miserable. What you call my vices are talents given me by Nature to equal matters. Vices, virtues! If I didn't know you were a doctor, I'd take you for a Socialist. [DR. STRATTON chuckles and goes up stage again, L., signalling with the lantern.]

DR. STRATTON [*putting down the lantern and coming down*]. I can see no sign of a boat putting off.

JERRY. They daren't risk it in this weather. [*A great crash of water from the bay.*] You'll have to wait for the

end of the storm. . . . Christianity teaches, Miss Bretherton, that you and I are to be despised, not in letter of course, but in deed. That's because religion has nothing to do with Nature. How many ways are we taught of gaining salvation? There are sects teaching a hundred thousand different methods of reaching Heaven, but the first and last of them is charity. You won't get charity from the world, but if you have it yourself it will never occur to you to jump into the sea just because your father didn't get married by a clergyman or a registrar.

DR. STRATTON. Jerry, be off, or I'll box your ears.

MAISIE. No, no. Let him tell me.

DR. STRATTON. Nonsense, child, the lad's crazy.

MAISIE. No, no.

JERRY. Crazy! Shall I tell you why they think I'm crazy, Miss Bretherton? Because I attach no value to this life. Because I know that I am the sport of the law of cause and effect. Because I don't worry my head chasing shadows, because I really keep my mental balance, knowing that there is no real satisfaction beyond the wonders of Nature. I know the misery that any other creed plunges one into. I have seen something of it and I have read more. Crazy! Yes, I am mad because I am a pioneer. I am mad because by accident in my youth I have discovered what all men discover in their old age. Miss Bretherton, I have told you. Beware of the world with its artifices, its schemes, its devices. Your suicide to-night would have been a triumph for mock morality. [*The sea bellows applause from the bay.*] Hark at the old prophet! He knows. He knows I am right. I'm his pupil. He taught me, yes, he taught me. [*He climbs the rock cliff*

to the L.] We're both mad, aren't we? Answer then. Tell them we're mad. [*He has disappeared. The sea crashes again.*] That's right. Mad! Mad! Mad! [*His voice dies away.*]

DR. STRATTON. The storm upsets him. I'm afraid when he is older he may have to be confined.

MAISIE. I don't think you're right. He is a little odd, but he talks very clearly.

DR. STRATTON. He does at times. His father was a very distinguished scientist, and he has inherited something of his brain. But only Tom Denny and I know that, and you must not repeat it.

MAISIE. Oh, I am so passionately curious to know who my father was.

DR. STRATTON. It is highly improbable that you will ever know. And it is better that you should not know.

MAISIE. Oh, why?

DR. STRATTON. Primarily because he can have no idea of your existence and is probably now a happily married man with children of his own.

MAISIE. Yes. Yes. How complicated we have made life. Oh, there is a lot of sense in Jerry's ravings.

DR. STRATTON. We all have our quota of wisdom, my dear girl. But never make the mistake of accepting the whole programme of any particular prophet. Now you must go home, and before you go, you must tell me that you see things differently and that you will——

MAISIE. I realise that I was wrong and selfish. I will go back to my moth—to Mrs. Bretherton. Don't ask me to do anything else.

DR. STRATTON. Listen. When you took your some-

what tempestuous leave of us in the cottage just now, I had a little talk with Miss Scarth. I suggested that she should return to London, or at any rate leave here. She refuses. She wants to be near you. Maisie Bretherton, you don't know your mother. To-night she has endured a terrible agony, a far greater agony than she has ever suffered before. Yet because of this great maternity passion she proposes staying here and enduring further agonies.

MAISIE. I can't speak to her. I can't——

DR. STRATTON. You are going to torture her, of course. I'm afraid it's hopeless to ask you to do anything else. Well, torture her. Put her through as much agony as your pretty little head can devise, but——

MAISIE. But what?

DR. STRATTON. Report to me at intervals. Write to me of your feeling towards her and her attitude towards you. Send me the log of the torture-chamber, and send it written up accurately. [*He speaks grimly and threateningly. The waves bellow in echo.*]

MAISIE. What do you mean? You are frightening me.

DR. STRATTON. By God, I mean to. Send me the true story week by week that I may interfere before it is too late. I was only just in time eighteen months ago. This time I am determined for far stronger reasons not to be too late.

MAISIE. Why is this? Why are you so interested?

DR. STRATTON [*solemnly*]. From the bottom of my heart I love your mother—but if you whisper a word of it to a soul on earth I'll pitch you into the sea. Now will you write?

MAISIE [*thoroughly scared*]. You—love—her? But——

DR. STRATTON [*gripping her arm*]. Will you write?

MAISIE. Yes. You're hurting me. Yes.

DR. STRATTON. That's right. [*Again the roar of the furious surf.*] Go home now, and for the future take a hot-water bottle to bed with you, and try and melt your heart.

[*The voice of MRS. BRETHERTON is heard off R. calling.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON [*off*]. Maisie! Maisie! Maisie!

DR. STRATTON [*going up the steps R. a little way*]. Hello, there. This way. [*MRS. BRETHERTON and FELICITY appear at the head of the steps. Both are dressed as they were in the last Act. FELICITY has a dark cloak loosely wrapped round her. MRS. BRETHERTON carries MAISIE'S crimson cloak.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON [*seeing MAISIE and descending the steps*]. How you frightened me! Put your cloak on. [*MAISIE allows it to be put round her.*] Whatever brought you down here at this time of night?

DR. STRATTON. She came down to collect her thoughts, perhaps, Mrs. Bretherton. At any rate, she has been in safe hands. [*A roar of breaking waves from the bay below.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON. And on such an awful night! Miss Scarth and I have been searching for you everywhere.

FELICITY [*to DR. STRATTON*]. You have not gone yet, then?

DR. STRATTON [*to FELICITY*]. You know that if I had gone I would return. [*Speaking aloud.*] They can't get a boat off. If this storm doesn't disappear pretty quick I shall have to find a shakedown on the island.

MRS. BRETHERTON. We could give you a room, Doctor.

DR. STRATTON. That is very kind of you.

MRS. BRETHERTON. Not at all. Don't hesitate to come up if the storm continues. Come along, Maisie. [*She goes towards the steps R. and passes FELICITY, then she turns to MAISIE, who is following her.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON. Maisie, say good-night to your mother.

MAISIE [*stiffening herself, and speaking after a pause without looking at FELICITY*]. Good-night.

FELICITY [*extending her arms to the girl*]. Good-night, darling. For pity's sake, let me kiss you. [*The girl steps passionately back, but she catches DR. STRATTON'S eye.*]

DR. STRATTON. Maisie, you will let your mother kiss you. [*The girl stands still, her breasts rising and falling tumultuously. FELICITY goes to her.*]

DR. STRATTON [*gently*]. Lift your head, Maisie. [*MAISIE lifts her head. FELICITY kisses her on the forehead.*]

MAISIE [*drawing back again, and speaking with suppressed resentment*]. Is that all? [*Lightning flashes. MAISIE bursts past FELICITY and MRS. BRETHERTON, and rushes up the steps and off. There is a roll of thunder. MRS. BRETHERTON kisses FELICITY.*]

MRS. BRETHERTON. Have courage, my dear. She will change. She will change. [*MRS. BRETHERTON wearily climbs the steps R. and disappears.*]

FELICITY [*after MRS. BRETHERTON has gone*]. She winced!

DR. STRATTON. You must not expect too much. The girl is barely eighteen years old. She was asked to bear

a terrible shock to-night. I have an idea that her attitude will alter as she grows older, and has more understanding of the world.

FELICITY. She may. She may. Meanwhile, what am I going to do without her?

DR. STRATTON. I have already told you that you are foolish to stay here where you will be constantly reminded of her. Mrs. Bretherton cannot force her to be as much as civil to you unless she herself wishes it.

FELICITY. It is painful to me that you suggest my going back, you who sent me here—saved me—

DR. STRATTON. Saved you for this!

FELICITY. Oh, it is not your fault.

DR. STRATTON. Of course not, but I should be very much to blame if I did not make an effort to save you from the torture in front of you. In London you would find distraction, and in the state of the girl's mind at present the less she sees of you the better, if there is ever to be a reconciliation. [JERRY enters down path L.]

FELICITY. Back to London! Back to London! What sort of distraction awaits me there?

JERRY. You are going back?

FELICITY. Ah, Jerry, what sent you here at this moment?

JERRY. Did you say that you were going back?

FELICITY. Yes, my dear Jerry, that is the suggestion, that I go back, desert you and Petit Bot and—and the sea.

JERRY. Leave the sea! Leave the sea! Has all the world gone mad to-night? [A great wave crashes on the beach.] Ah, did you hear? Ask him, ask him! [He

climbers up the cliff L., looks down on the sea and shouts.]

Shall she go? Answer, you tyrant! Shall she go?

FELICITY [*going to the edge of the platform and extending her hands to the water*]. Ah, yes. You have the right to speak. Shall I go? [*Another great boom comes up from the beach.*]

JERRY [*a flash of lightning outlining his figure*]. Shame, he cries. Shame! [*The thunder booms.*] Go to your death! Go to your death! That is the sea's answer. [*He comes down from the rocks and approaches DR. STRATTON.*] You'd tempt her away, would you? You, who sent her here. Back to that hell that so nearly destroyed her. What devil's work is that?

DR. STRATTON. There are more things in Heaven and on earth, Jerry, than the sand and the sea and the gifts they bring. According to your lights you are right, but humanity is for you an undiscovered country.

FELICITY. Yes, Jerry, my loyal little friend, I am afraid you cannot advise me any longer.

JERRY [*beside himself with rage*]. So you'd go, would you? I'll tell the sea that. The sea will strike you. You cannot flout it. Look what you have taken from it. Are you going while the sea says no? [*The noise of the waves in the bay and the rush of the wind is now almost deafening. The storm is at its height.*] I'll find out. You sha'n't go. I'll tell the sea. I stole that girl from him, but she wasn't his. I'll tell the sea. You can't—you sha'n't go. [*He rushes off L. up the path.*]

DR. STRATTON [*coming to FELICITY C.*]. Have you made up your mind? [*A flash of lightning followed by thunder.*]

FELICITY. You don't see it fairly. Remember what happened to me before. Now I suffer even greater mental agony. Am I likely to lead any other life?

DR. STRATTON. You are a different woman.

FELICITY [*bitterly*]. Yes, yes, yes. Just that soldier boy's view. Just what Car said at dinner to-night. Because I have this long spoon I may eat with the devil. [*Lightning, thunder and a crash of the waves.*]

DR. STRATTON [*speaking after the noise has subsided*]. You may use your long spoon for another purpose.

FELICITY. And that?

DR. STRATTON [*speaking with great emotion*]. Use it for the banquet of love, for a man's sake, for the sake of possible children.

FELICITY. The time for that is past. No man would forgive what I have been, what I still am.

DR. STRATTON. No man save one.

FELICITY. And he?

DR. STRATTON. The man who, understanding all, forgives all.

FELICITY. There is no one. I have committed the sin that men call unpardonable.

DR. STRATTON. Felicity Scarf, I understand all.

FELICITY [*wonderingly and eagerly*]. Yes?

DR. STRATTON. Felicity, I forgive all—if there is anything to forgive. Come back for my sake. Come back with me, and together we will pray God for another parenthood.

FELICITY [*whispering*]. Another parenthood . . . Your strength. . . . Your help. . . . Your guidance You, who saved me. . . . You . . . [*He is close to her,*

and a little behind her. Her cloak slips from her shoulders as she turns to him. A flash of lightning gilds her beautiful dress.] Ah, that you can never mean.

[For answer DR. STRATTON takes her in his arms. He kisses her. As he holds her in his arms there is a last roar of fury from the elements, then a sudden hush. Clouds desert the moon and a soft white light irradiates the scene. JERRY enters L. very quietly. As he does so, DR. STRATTON and FELICITY separate.]

JERRY [*approaching them and scrutinising their faces with suspicion*]. The storm has passed very quickly.

[The scene is very still. The three figures on the stage emphasise the quiet by remaining perfectly motionless. In the distance is heard a light rumble of thunder, going away. Again the moon is clouded. The figures are seen dimly, standing like statues.]

CURTAIN.

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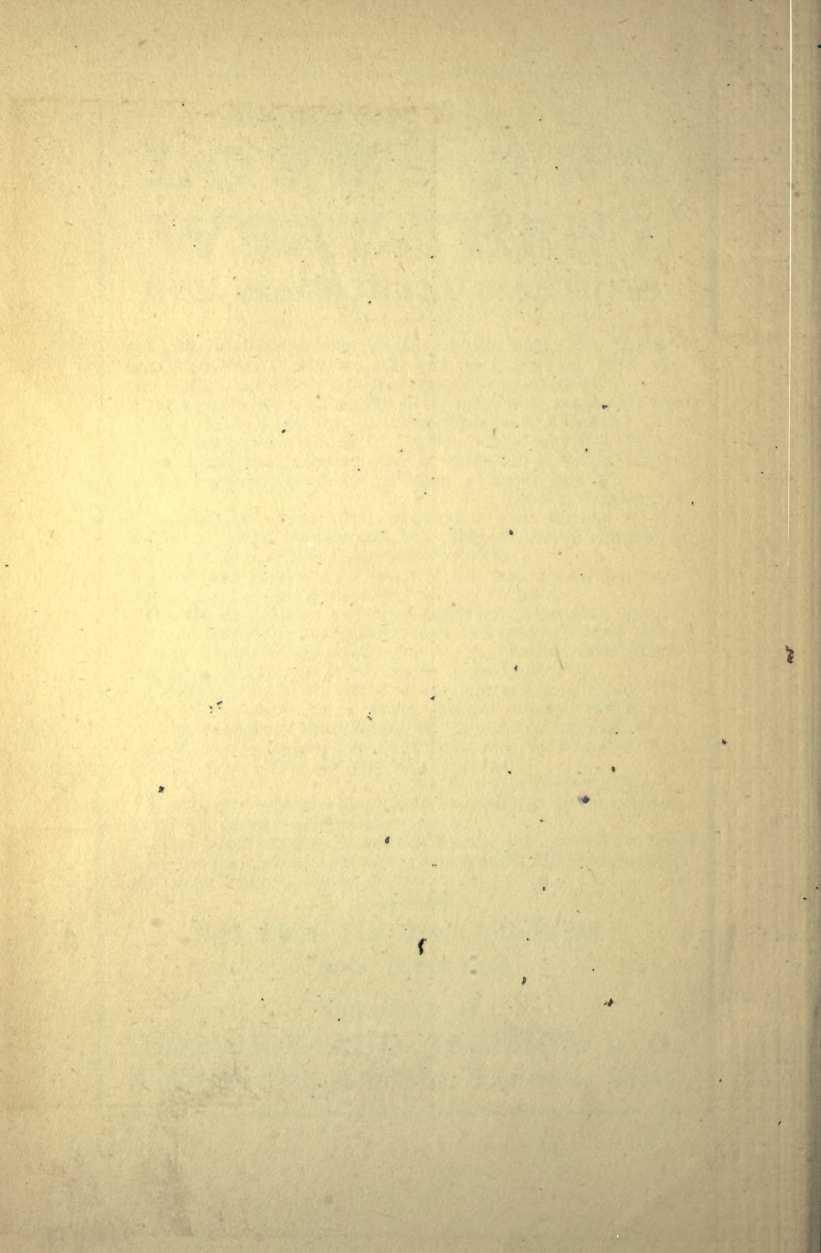
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